

HENRIK IBSEN

A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

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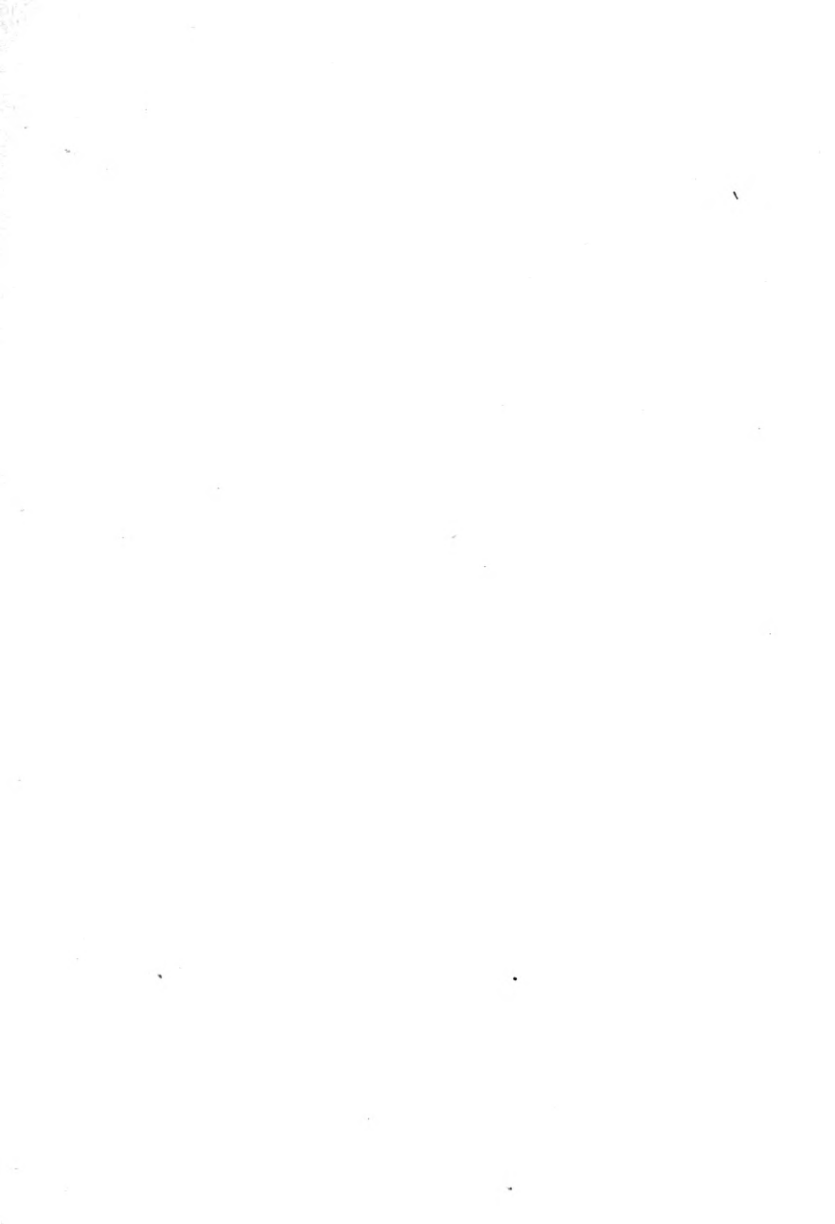
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HENRIK IBSEN

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF IBSEN'S WORKS

WITH DATES OF PUBLICATION.

- CATALINA. 1850.
THE WARRIOR'S TOMB (unpublished).
NORMA; OR, A POLITICIAN'S LOVE (unpublished).
ST. JOHN'S NIGHT (unpublished).
FRU INGER OF OESTRAAT. 1857.
OLAF LILJEKRANS (unpublished).
THE FEAST AT SOLHAUG. 1857.
THE CHIEFTAINS OF HELGELAND. 1858.
LOVE'S COMEDY. 1862.
THE PRETENDERS. 1864.
BRAND. 1866.
PEER GYNT. 1867.
THE YOUNG MEN'S UNION. 1869.
POEMS. 1871.
EMPEROR AND GALILEAN. 1873.
THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY. 1877.
A DOLL HOME. 1879.
GHOSTS. 1881.
AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE. 1882.
THE WILD DUCK. 1884.
ROSMERSHOLM. 1886.
THE LADY FROM THE SEA. 1888.
HEDDA GABLER. 1890.
THE MASTER BUILDER. 1892.
LITTLE EYOLF. 1894.
JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN. 1896.
WHEN WE DEAD AWAKE. 1899.





Henrik Ibsen

HENRIK IBSEN

A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By HENRIK JÆGER

From the Norwegian

By WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE

SECOND EDITION

WITH A SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER BY THE TRANSLATOR



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1901

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1901



PREFACE.

THE interest now taken, among English-speaking people, in the writings of HENRIK IBSEN, seems to make it desirable that some extended account of his life and work should be placed within the reach of the public. I had for some time been contemplating the preparation of a critical essay upon the subject, when this work by Henrik Jæger came into my hands, and I concluded to translate it instead of writing the original study of which I had at first thought. While Herr Jæger's book, being addressed primarily to the Scandinavian public, — already familiar with Ibsen's writings, — is, in some respects, not exactly what would have been written with a strictly English-speaking audience in view, it seems, on the whole, to cover the ground fairly well and to be, for the most part, just and intelligible. The occasional allusions to matters of Scandinavian history and literature may not convey as distinct

a meaning to an English-speaking as to a Norwegian or Danish public, but the picture presented of the subject of the biography is clearly outlined and well-proportioned, his methods and aims are carefully defined, his message is distinctly stated, and the long series of his works made the subject of a broadly sympathetic analysis and criticism. Since a large number of those works already exist in careful English translations, while other translations are likely to follow, the English reader is now, or soon will be, in a position to understand his Ibsen almost as well as he understands his Goethe or his Hugo.

I say almost as well, because, unfortunately, the two master-works of the great Norwegian — “Brand” and “Peer Gynt” — are impossible of adequate English translation, almost impossible of English translation at all, as I have abundant reason to know, from the difficulty experienced in reproducing the two hundred or more verses extracted from those poems for use in the present work. The difficulty arises from the characteristic metrical form of the two poems. “Brand” is written wholly, and “Peer Gynt” largely, in rhymed octosyllabic verse, the rhyme often repeated three or four times, and frequently feminine in ending. Such verse might be successfully written in Chaucerian English or in modern Ger-

man, but not in modern English. It is, in short, the verse of "Hudibras," only far more compact and serious, more exact in rhyme, and richer in feminine endings. Acceptable German translations of both poems have been made, and to these the reader must be referred. For the extracts from these two poems included in the present translation, as well as for the other verse translations scattered through its pages, I must beg the reader's indulgence. The metrical form has been scrupulously reproduced in every respect but one,—the feminine rhymes having been often replaced by rhymes of a single syllable. Even the order of rhyming has been preserved in almost every case. Working under these primary limitations, the thought and the figurative form of its expression have been reproduced as accurately as was possible. If the reader still think that the result is doggerel, I will at least remind him that the verse of "Hudibras"—the principal example of the form in English poetry—is open to the same charge, and that the original Norwegian also often comes dangerously near to producing the effect of doggerel. It is saved, in fact, from the ascription of that quality, only by its compact and pregnant thought and by its intense seriousness of purpose. Finally, I will say that the verse of Ibsen is often as crabbed as that of

Browning in its most perverse form, and that the two poets have about the same disregard for the external graces of poetic diction.

I have supplied footnotes to the present translation in the few cases in which they seemed necessary to make the text intelligible to an English-speaking public. On the other hand, — and this is the only liberty that I have taken with the original, — I have suppressed such notes of the author as are merely references to Scandinavian books and periodicals inaccessible to English readers. In place of such notes I thought it best to provide this introduction with a few remarks upon the existing English translations of Ibsen's plays, and upon one or two critical studies of special importance to which English readers may be referred.

Of translations, the first to be made was that of "Emperor and Galilean," by Catherine Ray (London, 1876). Then came "A Doll Home," by Henrietta F. Lord (London, 1882), which was first published under the title of "Nora," and which has recently appeared in an American edition under its proper title. The series of prose dramas now being published under the supervision of William Archer is to include translations of "A Doll Home," "The Young Men's Union," "The Pillars of Society," "Ghosts," "An Enemy

of the People," "The Wild Duck," "Fru Inger of Oestraat," "The Chieftains of Helgeland," "The Pretenders," "Rosmersholm," and "The Lady from the Sea," — in other words, of all the prose dramas except the great historical tragedy, "Emperor and Galilean." Then there is the handy volume of "The Camelot Classics," edited by Havelock Ellis, and containing Mr. Archer's translations of "The Pillars of Society" and "Ghosts," and Mrs. Aveling's translation of "An Enemy of the People." Independent translations of "Rosmersholm" and "The Lady from the Sea" have also been published.

Among critical studies of Ibsen, the following may be mentioned. "Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe," by Edmund W. Gosse (London, 1879), is the work which first called the attention of English readers to Ibsen's writings, and is still one of our best sources of information upon the subject. The essay by Georg Brandes, to which frequent reference is made in these pages, may be found in "Eminent Authors of the Nineteenth Century," translated by Rasmus B. Anderson (New York, 1886). Those who can get access to a file of the short-lived but valuable periodical, "Scandinavia," will find in the first volume (Chicago, 1883-84) a series of papers by the late Thorkild A. Schovelin, which, although

written in faulty English, are remarkable for their sympathetic appreciation of Ibsen's genius. The introductions to Mr. Archer's first volume and to the "Camelot" volume already mentioned are interesting and trustworthy. As for the articles upon Ibsen to be found in English and American periodicals of the past year, they are far too numerous to specify, and are as a rule of little value. I wish, however, to call attention to an account of "Peer Gynt" — the best that I have ever seen in English — written by Philip H. Wicksteed for "The Contemporary Review" of August, 1889.

WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE.

CHICAGO,

September, 1890.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THIS book has now been out of print for nearly three years, owing to the destruction by fire, early in 1899, of all the copies then unsold. A new edition would be desirable in any case, since the work is still, as it was when the original was first published in 1888, the only authoritative account of Ibsen's life and writings. But a new edition becomes even more necessary for the reason that an important series of plays—six in number—have been added to the list of Ibsen's writings since Henrik Jæger prepared this critical biography in celebration of the dramatist's sixtieth birthday. Moreover, the thirteen years that have elapsed have witnessed an immense broadening of Ibsen's fame throughout the world; the tide of aspersion and misrepresentation has reached its ebb, and few voices are now raised to question his place among the great spirits of the nineteenth century. When that century ended, there were hardly more than half a dozen living writers in the whole cosmo-

politan world of letters who could fairly be ranked, either in achieved fame or in influence upon the younger generation, with Henrik Ibsen.

The importance, both of this biography and its subject, are such that I have no apology to offer for making the work again accessible to the public. But some apology is probably needed for the chapter of my own writing which I have ventured to add. Henrik Jæger died in 1895, and thus the task of bringing his work down to the present date must perforce be undertaken by some one else. Failing a worthier pen, I have sought to outline the six plays that have appeared since Jæger's book was written, and to deal with them, as best I might, in the spirit of his work.

Except for a few trifling corrections, and the additional matter already mentioned, this edition is a reprint of that published in 1890. Even the original preface has been allowed to stand unchanged, thus requiring me to note in the present context the more important contributions made during the past ten or twelve years to the English literature of the subject. By way of translation, much has been done to fill out the series of works accessible in our language. The series of translations made (or supervised) by Mr. William Archer has been extended to include "Peer Gynt," as well as all of the later plays. Mr. Archer is at present

engaged upon a revised edition of the books of this series. By far the most important work of translation thus far done is found in Professor C. H. Herford's versions of "Love's Comedy" and "Brand." The latter translation is one of the most remarkable ever made, and the successful manner in which it has performed a task of extraordinary difficulty goes far to falsify the statement, made in my preface of 1890, that "Brand" is "impossible of adequate English translation." Certainly, Professor Herford has achieved a success in turning this poem into English that goes far beyond the best that I had supposed possible. The English reader has now no excuse for not becoming acquainted with the greatest of Ibsen's works, and he will also find in the translator's introduction to "Brand" one of the deepest and most suggestive pieces of critical writing of which Ibsen has thus far been made the subject.

The ethical and philosophical problem of "Brand" is indeed a difficult one, and has baffled many commentators. By far the most illuminating discussion of the subject that has come to my attention is found in an article by M. A. Stobart, which appeared in "The Fortnightly Review" for August, 1899. This article shows how deeply the ideals of Brand are rooted in the philosophy of Kierkegaard, and provides an intelligible explana-

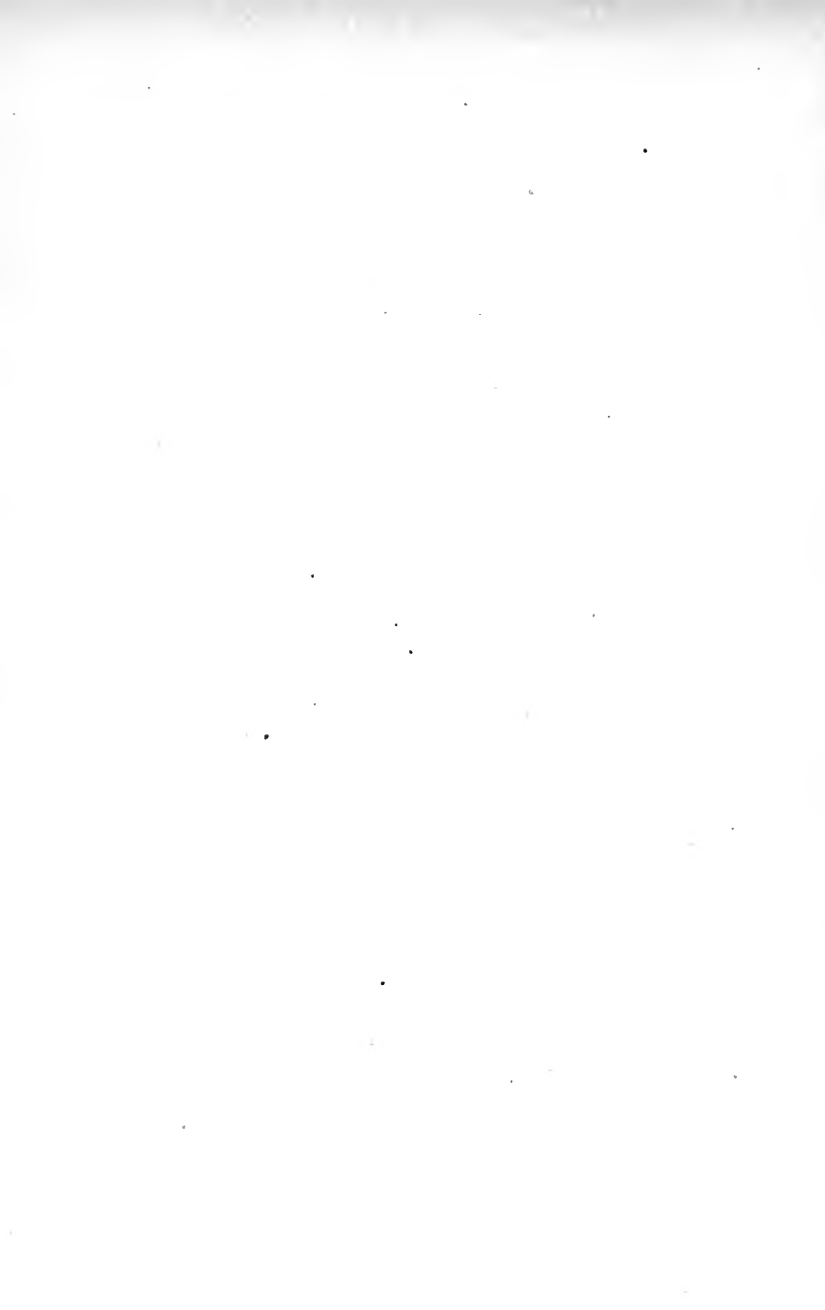
tion of the puzzling final episode of the avalanche and the macaronic ending of the play. Much other Ibsen criticism of the past twelve years must be passed by without mention here, but there are two books that deserve attention. One is "A Commentary on the Writings of Henrik Ibsen," by the late H. H. Boyesen, a book published in 1894. This work deals with the writings of Ibsen *seriatim* down to "The Master Builder," and discusses them in a highly intelligent and interesting fashion. The other book is a translation of three essays by the Danish critic Georg Brandes. These essays are dated, respectively, 1867, 1882, and 1898. The first of these essays is the one frequently mentioned in the present book. The last of them was the contribution of Dr. Brandes to the celebration of Ibsen's seventieth birthday. The three taken together thus constitute, in the words of Mr. Archer, who edits the English translation, "a contemporaneously noted record of the ever-developing relation, throughout more than thirty years, of these two remarkable minds," and thus "in some sort a running commentary on Ibsen's spiritual development." It is certainly one of the most valuable discussions of Ibsen to be read in the English language.

W. M. P.

CHICAGO, October, 1901.

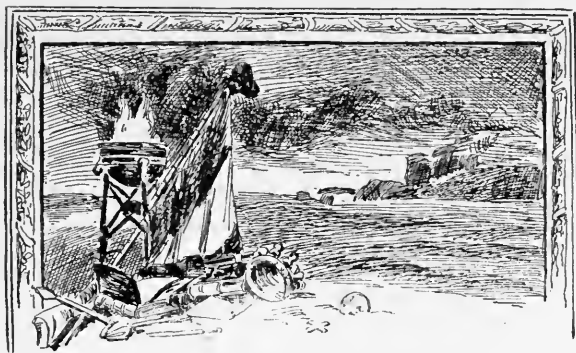
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I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

ABOUT the year 1720 a Danish skipper, named Peter Ibsen, came from Möen to Bergen, became a citizen of the latter place, and married the daughter of a German settler. He was the great-great-grandfather of the poet Henrik Ibsen.

The great-grandfather bore the name of Henrik Petersen Ibsen, and was also a shipmaster. He married Wenche Dischington, the daughter of a naturalized Scotch settler, but died less than a year after the wedding. The widow afterwards married Dean v. d. Lippe of Solum near Skien, and so her branch of the Ibsen family became associated with that town. From her first marriage she had a single son, born after the father's death, and given his name.

Henrik Ibsen, the second, married the daughter of a merchant of Skien named Plesner. Both the merchant and his wife were of German descent. This marriage was also of brief duration. Henrik Ibsen had chosen the occupation of his father and grandfather, and the ship owned and commanded by him went down with every soul on board off Hesnæs near Grimstad,—that is, in the quarter where the scene of “*Terje Vigen*” is laid. Only fragments, including the name-board of the ship, drifted ashore, and told of the disaster. A year after the widow married a shipmaster named Ole Paus, and to him she bore five children. From her first marriage she had one son, Knud, the poet’s father.

His mother’s name was Maria Cornelia Altenburg. She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Skien, who had himself begun life, after the custom of the time, as a shipmaster. He also was of German ancestry.

In all four of these generations, then, we see that foreign blood was mingled with the stock of the Danish seaman,—German, Scotch, German, and German once again. Norse admixture might possibly be found at some point or other if the genealogy were to be traced back on the mother’s side, but not a single drop of Norse blood has played a direct part in the formation

of Henrik Ibsen's temperament, which has, nevertheless, been characterized as "peculiarly Norse."

This ancestry sheds a light upon his character; it helps to explain his isolation and his cosmopolitanism; it enables us to understand how it is that he has been able so completely to separate himself from the land of his birth, and to pass more than a score of years in voluntary exile.

It enables us also to discern the origin of even deeper peculiarities of his character.

One comes almost involuntarily to think of the Puritanism and idealism that have played so essential a part in Scotch history, and made such an impress upon Scotch philosophy, when dealing with this man, whose demands upon his fellows are as uncompromising as are those of the idealist, and whose outlook upon the world is as sombre as that of the Puritan.

And then the German influence! The German's tendency towards speculation, his liking for pure abstractions, his talent for systematic and logical thought, has not all this left a mark upon Henrik Ibsen's personality, and exerted an influence over his intellectual development?

If we seek for closer information concerning the quarter from which his intellectual inheritance has come, we must look especially to the women. Their influence has evidently been the most potent.

The grandmother appears to have been a highly gifted lady, according to the standard of her time; she was deeply interested in everything that was going on about her in the world; hers was an austere and serious nature, inclined towards religion, not at that time a general trait among persons living in circles like hers. Of the children of her second marriage we are told that they were marked, with one or two exceptions, by a shyness and reserve that made them difficult of approach.

The mother also was reserved in her disposition, finding it difficult to open herself to others. This characteristic developed with years into a shyness that became in some degree the inheritance of her children.¹ One of them thus describes her in a letter to the author of this book: "She was a quiet, lovable woman, the soul of the household, and everything to her husband and children. It was not in her to be bitter or reproachful." In this little sketch there seems to lie dormant the germ of a whole series of Ibsen's women.

The men had a more cheerful temperament.

The grandfather seems to have had an active

¹ This reserve probably came into the race with the Paus family; for the old Fru Altenburg, Ibsen's mother's mother, was a sister of the Paus with whom his father's mother made her second marriage, and the children of this second marriage were characterized by just such a reserve.

brain and lively interests. His humor was cheerful, and he was full of fun and jest, it is said.

The father inherited his mother's austerity and his father's vivacity. They were combined in him in the form of a keen wit. His character was cheerful and social, his intelligence remarkable, and his wit ever ready for the combat. These qualities made him popular among his fellows, but caused him to be feared at the same time; for the words which he let fall were not always innocent, and he knew how to say bitter and unsparing things about people who had, in one way or another, awakened his dislike. It was evidently from him that the son inherited those qualities which led him to write "*Love's Comedy*" and "*The Young Men's Union*."

Thus conditioned ancestrally, Henrik Ibsen was born at Skien, March 20, 1828, the first child of his parents.

Skien was then as now a simple lumber village. It had barely three thousand inhabitants. Small as the town was, its life was varied, and its commercial activity considerable. In the middle of the town Knud Ibsen managed an extensive and varied business.

Ibsen himself has written and placed at my disposal the following account of his boyhood's surroundings:—

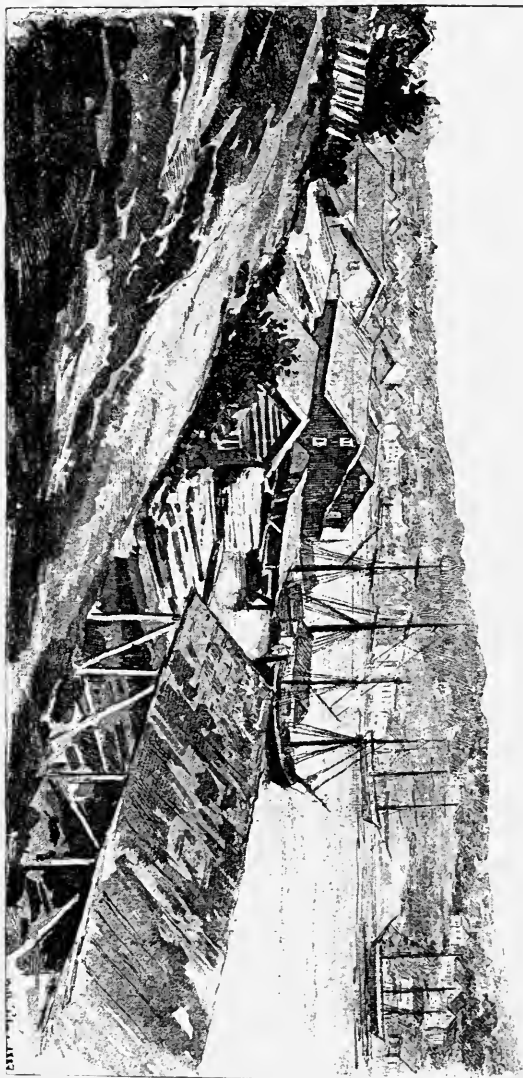
"At the time when, a number of years ago, the streets of my native town of Skien were named, — or perhaps rechristened, — the honor was done me of giving to one of them my name. At least report has said so, and I have been told of it by trustworthy travellers. According to their accounts, this street runs from the market-place down to the sea, or 'muddringen.'¹

"But if this description be accurate, I cannot imagine why the street has come to bear my name, for in it I was neither born nor did I ever live. On the contrary, I was born in a court near the market-place, — Stockmann's Court, it was then called. This court faces the church, with its high steps and its noteworthy tower. At the right of the church stood the town pillory, and at the left the town-hall, with the lockup and the madhouse. The fourth side of the market-place was occupied by the common and the Latin schools. The church stood in a clear space in the middle.

"This prospect made up, then, the first view of the world that was offered to my sight. It was all architectural; there was nothing green, no open country landscape. But the air above this four-cornered enclosure of wood and stone was filled, the whole day long, with the subdued roar of the Langefos, the Klosterfos, and the many other falls, and through this sound there pierced, from morning till night, something that resembled the cry of women in keen distress, now rising to a shriek, now subdued to a moan. It was the sound of the hundreds of saws, that were at work by the falls. When I read of the guillotine afterwards, I always had to think of these saws.

¹ The word may perhaps be translated "mud-flats" — TR.

SKIEN, HISEN'S NATIVE TOWN.





“The church was naturally the most imposing building of the town. At the time when, one Christmas eve near the close of the last century, Skien was set on fire through the carelessness of a servant-maid, the church which then stood there burned with the rest. The servant-maid was, as might easily happen, put to death. But the town, rebuilt with straight and broad streets upon the slopes and in the hollows where it lies, gained thereby a new church, of which the inhabitants boasted with a certain pride that it was built of yellow Dutch clapboards, that it was the work of an architect from Copenhagen, and that it was exactly like the Kongsberg church. I was not able at that time fully to appreciate these advantages, but my mind was deeply impressed by a white, stout, and heavy-limbed angel, with a bowl in his hand, on week-days suspended high up under the roof, but on Sundays, when children were to be baptized, lowered gently into our midst.

“Even more than by the white angel in the church, my thoughts were occupied by the black poodle who lived at the top of the tower, where the watchman called out the hours of the night. It had glowing red eyes, but was not often seen; in fact, it appeared, as far as I know, upon one occasion only. It was a New Year’s night, and the watchman had just called ‘One’ from the window in the front of the tower. Just then the black poodle came up the tower steps behind him, stood for a moment, and glared at him with the fiery eyes, — that was all, but the watchman at once fell head foremost out of the tower-window down into the market-place, where he was seen lying dead next morning by all the pious folk who went to the early New Year’s service. Since that night no

watchman has ever called out 'One' from *that* window in the tower of Skien church.

"This incident of the watchman and the poodle occurred long before my time, and I have since heard of such things having happened in various other Norwegian churches, in the days of old. But the tower-window in question has stood prominently in my memory since I was a child, because from it I got my first deep and lasting impression. For my nurse took me up into the tower one day, and let me sit right in the open window, held from behind, of course, by her stout arms. I remember distinctly how it struck me to see the crowns of the people's hats; I looked down into our own rooms, saw the window-frames and curtains, saw my mother standing at one of the windows; I could even see over the roof of the house into the yard, where our brown horse stood tied near the barn-door and was whisking his tail. I remember that on the side of the barn there hung a bright tin pail. Then there was a running about, and a beckoning from our front door, and the nurse pulled me hastily in, and hurried downstairs with me. I do not remember the rest, but I was often told afterwards that my mother had caught sight of me up in the tower-window, that she had shrieked, had fainted, — as was common enough then, — and, having got hold of me again, had wept, and kissed and caressed me. As a boy, I never after that crossed the market-place without looking up to the tower-window. I felt that the window especially concerned me and the church poodle.

"I have preserved but one other recollection from those early years. Among the gifts at my christening there was a big silver coin bearing the image of a man's head. The man had a high forehead, a large hooked

nose, and a projecting under lip ; furthermore, his neck was bare, which I thought singular. The nurse told me that the man on the coin was 'King Fredrik Rex.' Upon one occasion I took to rolling the coin on the floor, and, as an unfortunate consequence, it rolled into a crack. I believe that my parents saw an evil omen in this, since it was a christening gift. The floor was torn up, and thorough and deep search was made, but King Fredrik Rex never again saw the light of day. For a long time afterwards I looked upon myself as a grave criminal, and whenever Peter Tysker, the town policeman, came out of the town hall and across to our front door, I ran as hurriedly as I could into the nursery, and hid under the bed.

"We did not live long in the court by the market-place. My father bought a bigger house, into which we moved when I was about four years old. My new home was on a corner, a little farther up town, just at the foot of the 'Hundevad' hill, named after an old German-speaking doctor, whose imposing wife drove a 'glass coach,' that was transformed into a sleigh for winter. There were many large rooms in this house, both up and down stairs, and we lived a very sociable life there. But we boys were not much within doors. The market-place, where the two biggest schools were situated, was the natural meeting-place and field of battle for the village youth. Rector Oern, an old and lovable man, ruled in the Latin school at that time ; in the common school there was Iver Flasarud, the beadle, also an imposing old fellow, who filled the post of village barber as well. The boys of these two schools had a good many warmly contested battles around the church, but as I belonged

to neither, I was generally present as a mere onlooker. For the rest, I was not much given to fighting as a boy. I was much more attracted by the pillory, already mentioned, and by the town hall, with its gloomy mysteries. The pillory was a reddish-brown post, of about a man's height ; on top there was a big round knob, that had been black at one time ; it now looked like an inviting and benevolent human face, a little awry. From the front of the post hung an iron chain, and from this an open bow, which always seemed to me like two small arms, ready to grasp my neck with the greatest of pleasure. It had not been used for many years, but I remember well that it stood there all the time that I lived in Skien. Whether or not it is still there, I do not know.

“And then there was the town hall. Like the church, it had high steps. Underneath there were dungeon cells, with grated windows looking into the market-place. Within the bars I have seen many pale and sinister faces. One room in the basement of the town hall was called the madhouse, and was really, strange as it now seems to me, at one time used for the confinement of the insane. This room had a grated window like the others, but inside the grating the whole opening was filled by a heavy iron plate, perforated with small round holes, so that it looked like a colander. Furthermore, this cell was said to have served for the confinement of a criminal named Brandeis, much talked of at the time and afterwards branded. It was also inhabited, I believe, by a life-convict, who had escaped, was recaptured, and flogged out on the Li market-ground. Of this latter, eye-witnesses related that he danced when he was led to the place of punishment, but had to be drawn back to the lockup in a cart.

“ In my boyhood Skien was a lively and sociable town, entirely different from what it was afterwards to become. Many highly-gifted, prominent, and respected families then dwelt, both in the town itself, and on great farms in the neighborhood. These families were mutually bound together by relationships, more or less near, and balls, daytime companies, and musical assemblies followed one upon another in close succession, both summer and winter. Also many travellers came to town, and, there being then no inns, the visitors stopped with friends and relatives. We nearly always had visiting strangers in our spacious place, and especially at Christmas and fair time our rooms were full, and open house the rule from morning till evening. The Skien Fair came off in February, and it was a happy time for us boys. We began to save up our skillings six months beforehand for the jugglers, and rope-dancers, and circus-riders, and for the purchase of honey-cakes in the fair booths. I do not know if this fair did much for trade ; I think of it as of a great popular festival, lasting the whole week through.

“ In those years not much account was made of the 17th of May¹ in Skien. A few young men shot with pop-guns out on Blege Hill, or burned fireworks ; that was about all. I have an idea that this reserve in our otherwise demonstrative townspeople was due to consideration for a certain highly-esteemed gentleman, who had a country-seat in the neighborhood, and whose head was respected for various reasons.

“ But it was all the merrier on St. John’s eve.² This

¹ May 17, 1814, the date of adoption of the Norwegian constitution.

² Midsummer eve, June 23.

was not celebrated by all the people together, but the boys and the grown-up people grouped themselves into five, six, or more companies, each of which worked to collect the material for its own bonfire. From as early as Whitsuntide we used to go in crowds around the wharves and shops to beg tar-barrels. In this matter a peculiar custom had reigned from time immemorial. Whatever we could not get freely given us was stolen, without either owner or police ever thinking to complain of this sort of violence. A company could thus by degrees collect a whole stack of empty tar-barrels. We had the same time-honored right to old barges. Whenever we found them ashore, if we could succeed in getting one quietly away, and well concealing it, we thereby acquired the right of possession, or, at least, our claims were not contested. The day before St. John's eve the barge was borne in triumph through the streets to the place of the bonfire. A fiddler sat up in the barge. I have often witnessed and taken part in such processions."

What Ibsen has thus told us is sufficient to give an idea of the sort of impressions which his youth received. The sad and the heavy preponderate. The solemnity of the church, the cheerlessness of the lockup, the severity of the pillory, the terror of the madhouse, — these were impressions which were certainly capable of casting a shadow over the joyousness of youth, awakening seriousness and an early habit of thought, even when we take account of the opposing influences of Fair diversions and St. John's eve bonfires.

Skien has had for a long time the credit of being a very religious community, and sectarian movements have found here one of their most grateful fields of activity. The town was famous in the last century as a nursery of pietism, and it was here that Pastor Lammers labored, giving rise to the movement that since has borne his name. From Skien as a focus it spread over the country and made a general stir in the religious consciousness. Naturally the movement was strongest in Skien itself, and with it Ibsen was brought into intimate relations, since a number of his closest kindred were affected by it. Recollections and experiences of this period of unrest provided, in part, the material for "Brand."

The germ of another of Ibsen's works — "The Young Men's Union" — has been sought, not without reason, in the impressions of his native town. For the town had its aristocracy, consisting of the officials and the wealthy, old-established families of the neighborhood; the rest were plebeians. Between these two classes there was raised a barrier as insurmountable as that between the burghers and the nobles of a small German State of the last century. It was impossible to pass this barrier by means of ability and force; every one who seemed to succeed in so doing was looked upon as a parvenu, *à la Pro-*

prietær Monsen, — however secure might seem his position. On the other hand, it was easy enough to be put without the circle when a man's circumstances became so reduced as to no longer warrant his admission.

The Ibsen household ranked with the aristocracy both by its situation and its connections, and it was, in Ibsen's earliest childhood, a centre of the social life of the town. Knud Ibsen was a man whose wit and other social gifts enabled him to gather people about him; and he was, besides, a liberal host, taking great satisfaction in maintaining a large and open house.

But when Henrik Ibsen was eight years old there came a sudden end to this life of comfort. The father was obliged to turn his property over to his creditors, and all that the family retained after their demands had been satisfied was Venstøb farm, — a small estate, neglected and in bad repair, just out of town. Here the family took refuge after the catastrophe, and their life here was marked by an economy and a retirement that stood in the sharpest contrast to its previous splendor. If the family had previously paid little heed to the social distinctions existing in the little town, they were now made to feel them all the more in the days of their reverse. The new condition of things doubtless cast a dark shadow upon

the little home, and next to his parents Henrik Ibsen, as the oldest of the children, was the one to feel it most keenly. He had been suddenly put outside, and early gained the experience to which he gave expression in 1850 in one of his first poems: —

“ Either must thou at life’s feast
Sit at table as a guest,
Or a looker-on stand staring
Through the lighted window-pane,
In the cold and wind and rain,
Outside, not to enter daring.”

Certain it is, in any case, that attention was drawn at an early age to his seriousness, so unnatural in a boy. He did not play like the other children. When his four younger brothers and sisters strove with one another in play out in the yard, he sought refuge from their thoughtless pranks in a little room opening upon a passage which led to the kitchen, and fastened the door with a hasp. He sat here, not only in summer, but in the coldest of the winter. “ For us,” his sister writes in the letter already mentioned, “ he was not a comfortable boy to get along with, and we used to bother him regularly by throwing stones and snowballs at the wall and door to get him to come out and play with us; and when he could not stand our siege any longer, he would rush out and after us; but he was not skilful at any sort of sport, and

violence was very far from his character, so nothing came of his appearance, and when he had chased us far enough off he went back into his closet."

What was he about in there?

First and foremost, he busied himself over a lot of old books he had got hold of. In this closet he became acquainted with the old book of which Hedwig speaks in the third act of "The Wild Duck," and the words which he places in her mouth may certainly be reckoned as a personal recollection from his childhood.

"And do you read in the books?" asks Gregers.

"Yes, when I can manage it; but most of them are in English, and I do not know that. I look at the pictures, however. There is a big, heavy book called 'Harrison's History of London;' it is certainly a hundred years old, and there are such a lot of pictures in it. At the beginning there is a picture of death with an hour-glass and a maiden. I think that is horrid. But then there are all the other pictures, with churches, and castles, and streets, and great ships sailing on the sea."

When he was not at his books he occupied himself with — magic arts. "He got leave to appear on certain Sunday afternoons as a magician in

one of the rooms of the house," we read in the letter, "and all the neighbors around were invited to witness the performance. I see him distinctly, in his short jacket, standing behind a large chest that was decorated and draped for the occasion, and where he presided over performances that appeared like witchcraft to the amazed spectators. Of course no one knew that Henrik's younger brother, well paid for his assistance, was inside the chest. The brother had stipulated for pay by threatening a scandal if it were withheld; and as that would have been, to a boy with Henrik's disposition, the most dreadful thing that could have happened, he always promised everything that the other demanded."

He also busied himself with pencil and water-colors. He drew a great many figures, gorgeously clad, on pasteboard. These were cut out, fastened to bits of wood, so that they could stand on their own legs, and arranged in various groups, — some busily conversing, others in serious attitudes, with a mien that made it evident that something important was on foot. These were the first scenic arrangements of the future dramatist.

The only out-door pleasure that he cared for was building. At times he was very busy at this. "I remember among other things a fort," his sister writes. "It seemed to me then a great

work of art, and he and his younger brother had worked at it for a long time. But the fort was not destined to stand; as soon as completed it was stormed and demolished." Probably he had been reading of some historical event, and had taken this means of giving it reality.

He attended a real-school in Skien, conducted by two candidates in theology. Here he learned the common branches, and a little Latin. He was especially interested in the religious instructions, and would sit for hours with his text-book, hunting up in the Bible the passages referred to.

When he was fourteen the family moved back into Skien; he was confirmed shortly afterwards, and then left home to earn his living and make his way in the world. Under such economical conditions as had been his lot, there can be no question of choosing the profession to which one is most inclined. One must put up with that which can be had at the least expense, and that gives the most speedy promise of support.

Ibsen wished to become an artist, and had devoted himself with growing enthusiasm to painting and drawing; he even kept up these occupations after his appearance as an author. Of how marked his talents in this direction were, it is at present impossible to form an opinion, as I have not been able to trace a single one of his artistic

efforts.¹ But that it was more than a fancy with him is shown by the deep interest in plastic art which he has kept through the years. Paintings have been the only things that he has cared to possess all the way down to the present time, and during his frequent and long sojourns in Italy he has made a very pretty collection of renaissance pictures. He is very proud of this collection, and has taken it with him, regardless of cost, wherever he has settled down for any length of time. His fine and unerring judgment of plastic art also discloses in him the painter's disposition.

In his youth, however, there could of course be no question of the cultivation of this talent; the circumstances of his family were too restricted to admit of such a thing, and so he was sent to the Grimstad apothecary to serve an apprenticeship as a pharmacist. At the age of sixteen he left his native town and his family, never to return to them except for one or two brief visits.

What had he received from life there at home in his native town? It had laid a burden upon his mind. It had aroused in him a feeling of repugnance for all those instruments of coercion that society brings to bear upon those who, by

¹ Botten-Hansen, in a biographical sketch published in the "*Illustreret Nyhedsblad*" for 1863, calls him "a not unsuccessful dilettante painter."

their own fault, or by the force of circumstances, come into conflict with the general order of things. The prison, the madhouse, the pillory, and public opinion had impressed themselves as so many threats upon his consciousness. The contrast between poverty and affluence had been made one of his first experiences; he had learned to know both before he was old enough to think clearly about them, and he had early been made to feel the difference that exists socially between the poor and the rich. All this had developed that reserve to which he had inherited a tendency; it had taught him to keep his own counsel, had made him quiet, serious, and taciturn.

Life for him did not mean intercourse with others; his life was in the world of thought and of dreams.

Thus accoutred he left his native town and went to his new dwelling-place. This was, as has been said, when he was entering upon his sixteenth year, and he remained there until he was nearly twenty-two. Thus he spent more than five years in this corner.

Grimstad is an even smaller town than Skien. When Ibsen was there it did not have more than eight hundred inhabitants.

Like most Norwegian towns to the eastward of Kristianssand, it is a little village of ship-owners,

substantial and well-to-do. And with success comes comfort. In a little village like this the thought of the inhabitants does not fly far; when they step over the threshold it is usually to inquire "whether the sloop has gotten over," or about the latest freight-quotations. Rarely, when great events are happening in the outside world, they cast some feeble waves against these coast towns, and those especially interested exchange a word or two about the latest news when they meet one another in the street. This done, they shake their heads and pass on. In such a town there is one club, one apothecary, one barber, and one inn. The apothecary is the town exchange, where all the idlers gather and discuss the events of the day, local matters especially, always of most interest. Every one knows his neighbors inside and out. No jot of a man's private affairs is concealed. And they all salute one another; the richest man gets the lowest bow, the next richest the next lowest, and so down the scale to the common laborer, who only gets a nod, while he himself stands respectfully, hat in hand. A stranger, coming to such a town, is astonished at the respectful salutations given him by the poor people whom he meets; all this cringing makes him ill at ease. This is because he does not understand such patriarchal customs; but the unsophisticated vil-

lager understands them, and he finds it obviously wise to observe them when he meets a well-dressed stranger in the street, whether he know him or not, for one can never tell how great a personage the stranger may be. In such a town everything moves slowly, quietly, and smoothly on; there is plenty of time, and haste makes waste. If a thing is not done to-day, it can be done to-morrow. All that is not customary is excess; personal peculiarities are reckoned as faults; any display of energy is regarded as eccentricity, and eccentricity is a crime.

But the sea stretches without, free and mighty, bringing wealth, and wreckage, and the latest Parisian fashions to the snug little town, from the great restless world in the distance.

Such are these little towns even yet, and such was certainly this one in Ibsen's youth and long afterwards.

From the sketch given by Ibsen in his preface to the second edition of "*Catilina*," we know what was his life in this little community. We know that these five years were a period of growth and unrest in his life. He formed bold plans for the future, and was swayed by ambitious ideas. He would not be content with being a pharmacist; he would, to begin with, climb a round higher up the social ladder, become a student, and study medi-

cine. And at the same time his poetic faculty gave its first signs of life; he had to steal the hours he spent in study, and from these stolen study hours, he again stole minutes for poetry.

This was in 1848 and 1849. The February Revolution, and the political events to which it gave rise in other lands, put all Europe into commotion, and the disturbance was mirrored in young Henrik Ibsen's mind. He followed the march of events as well as a Grimstad apothecary's apprentice could, and with youthful ardor he took sides with all who fought for freedom and against the oppressor. This spirit appears in his poems written during that period.

When, in August, 1849, the Magyars suffered their overwhelming defeat, he wrote a glowing poem "To Hungary," in which he gave expression to his grief at Hungary's and freedom's defeat. At the close, however, he found consolation in the thought that the vanquished Hungarian heroes — like the Poles, and like those who, on the scaffold, drenched German earth with their blood — would stand as shining examples for the coming generation.

"When the strength of younger races, on the throne avenging
hurled,

Mighty as an autumn tempest, drives the tyrant from the world,
Shall the name of Magyar a noble watchword for us be,
And the shades of fallen heroes lead us on to victory!"

At this time he wrote also the series of sonnets about the war between Germany and Denmark, which are mentioned in the preface to "*Catilina*." There were twelve of them in all, and they bore the resounding title: "*Scandinavians, Awake! An appeal to the Norwegian and Swedish Brothers.*" This was a sort of precursor of "*A Brother in Need*," and in it the youthful writer enthusiastically proclaimed that Norway and Sweden must come to Denmark's help, if they would maintain their honor, and secure their future as independent states.

That a young man in a subordinate position should entertain such ideas and put them into verse was obviously a fact that could not escape notice in such a "crow-corner" — especially as he did not refrain, "upon more exalted occasions," from expressing himself in conversation with a passion in consonance with his verse.

Nothing more was needed to mark him out for attention. That a raw apprentice to an apothecary should dare, in the presence of his elders, to talk of subjects concerning which they did not themselves dare to have an opinion, — this was too audacious!

But the matter did not rest here. Having once put himself into antagonism to his surroundings, Ibsen was not the man to shrink from battle. He

had the modest man's shyness about putting himself forward, and the diffident man's terror of causing scandal and exciting derision; but for this very reason he felt it to be a significant fact that his sayings should cause offence and awaken laughter: and, instead of yielding to attack, he assumed the offensive himself. The young and undeveloped genius, with the confidence of youth, held his own in this nest of narrow conservatism. "Truth compels me to say," he humorously observes in the preface to "*Catilina*," "that my actions, under these circumstances, were not such as were calculated to arouse any great hope that society would, as a result of my efforts, be a gainer in civic virtue; for I fell out with many, on account of epigrams and caricature-sketches, who deserved better of me, and whose friendship I prized at heart. Altogether, while a heavy storm was raging without, I found myself on a war-footing with the little community to which I was bound by circumstances."

It may be said that this war was but a tempest in a teapot; yet how characteristic of Ibsen it was! how distinctly it indicated his subsequent attitude towards society!

The relation between society and the individual is usually considered to be a peaceful one. Society is an agreement between its individual members to do and to leave undone certain things; the welfare

of the whole being the welfare of its parts. Society protects the individual, upon condition that the individual fulfil certain obligations towards society, — obligations whose purpose is to strengthen and sustain the system of mutual protection upon which the permanence of society depends, and to secure the regular and healthful progress which is its aim.

But the relation between society and the individual is not, after all, quite so idyllic and peaceful as this view would have it; there are shadows as well, and the darkest of them is the tendency of society to encroach unduly upon the individual. Society has a tendency to exert its regulative influence over territories with which it is not concerned, — a tendency to impose laws upon the individual in fields where he has a right to be his own master. In matters of opinion and conviction, for example, the individual should be sovereign; and yet here society tends to make a standard of the judgment of the majority, and to condemn those individuals who refuse to recognize it. And the smaller the society, the greater the number of these regions does it seek to control, — the greater is its inclination to set rules in matters where individuality should be its own rule; the less willing it is to admit that the exception may be justified. In this there lies a danger, not merely for individual free-

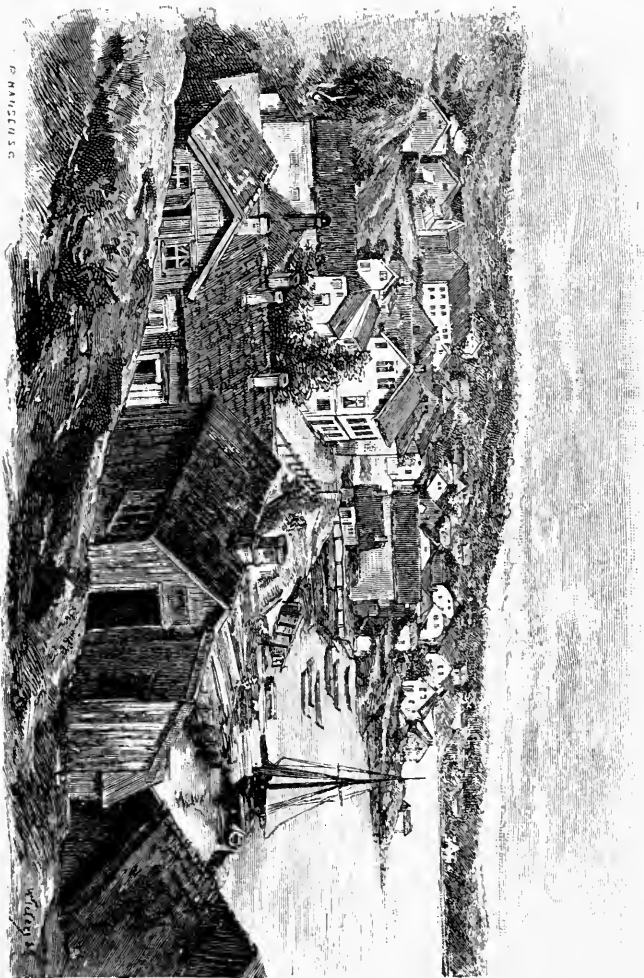
dom, but for society itself, for social progress depends upon originality, and originality is in its very nature exceptional. Genius is the most important and necessary of all exceptions; and when society so narrows itself as to leave no place for genius, it becomes necessary to revolt against society and to oppose the principle of the exceptional to the tyranny of custom. Individually viewed, the relation between the individual and society thus becomes, not a friendly relation for mutual benefit, but an opposed and hostile relation. Society appears to the individual as a tyrant, not a protector, — as a hindrance, not an aid to personal development, and its conventions as instruments of torture, to rack or compress individuality into conformity with the set standard. This is the view that has led to the anarchistic social theories of our age.

To such a relation with his environment Henrik Ibsen felt that he had come during his apprenticeship at Grimstad; and there already dawned upon his mind, dimly and with the uncertain light of youth, the view that was to illumine so clearly a whole series of the works of his ripest manhood.

Under such circumstances, in the preparation for his *examen artium*, he studied Sallust's "Catiline" and Cicero's "Orations against Catiline."

He devoured these accounts of the old Roman anarchist; and, through the moralizing and hypocritical indignation of Sallust, and the rhetorical pleading of Cicero, there appeared to him a picture of Catiline in revolt against society, — a picture that in more than one respect foreshadowed his own future development.

Vasenius has set himself the task of proving that the Catiline of Ibsen's drama is a true representation of the historic personage of that name, or, as he expresses it, "that the intuition of this youthful poet led him to grasp, with historical accuracy, the fundamental motive of Catiline's character." But, however interesting this question may be from an æsthetic standpoint, it has little psychological value, because it does not enlighten us as to the poet's relation to the material that lay before him. The poet of "Catilina" had no inkling of those historical researches to which the Finnish critic appeals. He knew only the Catiline of Cicero and Sallust, and to ascribe the rest to intuition is in no wise profitable, since to modern psychology intuition appears to be as mystical a conception as that of "vital force" to modern physiology. The only historical investigation that would here be of profit would be a comparison of Ibsen's work with its sources, and a setting forth of his atti-



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tude toward them. We will be contented with calling attention to one or two important points only.

Between Sallust's and Cicero's conception of Catiline there is no difference of kind, merely one of degree. In the eyes of both he is an almost wholly unprincipled adventurer, who is only concerned with the gratification of his passions, and who, in a sort of desperate madness, resorts to the most desperate measures, since he cannot attain his purpose by lawful means.

For Ibsen he is, on the contrary, first and foremost an indignant idealist, seeing and resenting the utter rottenness of his time, but himself too much a child of that corrupt age to play the part of reformer successfully. He is a Catiline who thinks and speaks like a sort of Cato. Read only his characterization, given in the very first scene, of the condition of affairs at Rome: —

“ Here reigns injustice,
And tyranny finds elsewhere no such sway.
We are indeed republican in name ;
Yet every citizen is but a bondsman
Plunged into debt, dependent as a serf
Upon the favor of a venal senate.
Vanished for aye the ancient social spirit,
The freedom which was once Rome's proudest boast.
And life and safety are a grace bestowed
But by the senate, to be bought with gold.
Here justice must give way to despotism,
The nobles by the mighty overshadowed.”

And the poet undoubtedly wishes to be taken literally and directly when, immediately afterward, he allows Catiline to characterize himself as —

“A man whose heart is stirred in freedom’s cause,
The foe of all injustice and all wrong,
Friend of the feeble, crushed by unjust laws,
And filled with courage to o’erthrow the strong.”

Or when, later, he represents him as thus outlining his plans: —

“The civic freedom ’t is I would restore,
The public spirit that in times gone by
Held sway in Rome. I would bring back to earth
That golden age when every Roman gladly
Offered his life upon his country’s altar,
His patrimony for the people’s welfare.”

In one place the author makes him even refer to Cato by name, when speaking of the dreams that he has cherished: —

“Dreams have I had at times, and mighty visions
Have risen to my view, and passed before me.
I dreamed I soared with wings like Icarus
High above earth, beneath the vault of heaven;
I dreamed my hands were granted of the gods
Gigantic strength and power to grasp the lightning.
And with this hand I seized the thunderbolt,
To hurl it on the city far beneath me.
And then the lurid, licking flames arose,
And Rome was laid in ashen ruins low.
Then called I with a loud and potent voice
On Cato’s kin to rise from out their tombs,
And myriad spirits rose at my command,
Took life again, and raised Rome from the dust.”

Ibsen's own revolutionary enthusiasm rings in all this talk about civic spirit, and in these protests against oppression and injustice. General and indefinite as they are, they make of "Catilina" a literary landmark in the revolutionary movement of the forties. The February Revolution had, as is well known, a social character, and had herein a point of similarity to that of Catiline. He might indeed have been made the hero of the work of some revolutionary poet of his own age, for his programme was to a certain extent socialistic. When Cicero relates of him that he denied the possibility of a faithful champion of the poor arising save from the ranks of the poor,¹ he records a trait that such a poet would have put to use. Ibsen, however, lets this pass almost unnoticed; he gives a free translation of the expression, "the champion of the poor" ("friend of the feeble, crushed by unjust laws"), and there lets the matter rest. The social aspect of the revolutionary movement of the age had not yet been perceived by him, and so the plans of his Catiline were represented as essentially political and moral. Ibsen merely gave form to his youthful and indefinite revolutionary sympathies, and altered them only so far as was

¹ "Negavit miserorum fidelem defensorem inveniri posse, nisi eum qui ipse miser esset."

demanding by historical fact. Rome, in Catiline's time, was a republic in decay ; consequently his purpose must be to restore the good old republican Rome, while the revolutionary party of the forties did not seek to re-establish an old order of things, but to shape a new one.

Ibsen's Catiline is then but the historically costumed image of his own feelings and moods at that time, and the author puts his most secret thoughts and dreams into the mouth of his hero. In the letter already quoted from, his sister tells of a conversation she had with him at that time, upon the occasion of one of his visits to the family. They were walking out to the Kapitels Mountain, a height near Skien, bearing the ruins of an old cloistered church. He explained to her that he wished to attain to "the utmost possible clearness of vision and fulness of power."

"And when you shall have attained to it, what then?" she asked.

"Then I wish to die," he answered.

This ideal, enthusiastic, and impersonal ambition of his youth is exactly reproduced in the following verses of "Catilina."

"If but one moment I might shine in splendor,
Blaze like a falling star upon the night, —
If I might but achieve one noble deed,
And link the name of Catiline forever
To fame and to undying memory, —

Then gladly would I, in the hour of triumph
All things forsake, — hie to an unknown shore ;
Then gladly plunge the dagger in my heart,
And gladly die, — for then I should have lived."

But however closely the figure of Catiline, with his craving for the ideal, stands related to his poet, Ibsen found himself compelled, in the development of the piece, to set himself apart from his subject, to properly motivate the tragic outcome.

Catiline succumbs without having realized his splendid dream, and this is brought about by two causes.

One of these is to be sought in the pettiness of his following, unable to comprehend the worth of his noble and lofty aims, and willing to fight only for personal ends. It is a recognition of this that impels Catiline to the utterance of the destructive or nihilistic fancies which are thus expressed : —

" Well, then, if *ancient* Rome may not be raised
Up by this hand, — *our* Rome shall pass away !
And soon, where ranks of marble columns stand,
Columns of smoke shall rise 'mid crackling flames ;
Temples and palaces shall lie in ruins,
And from its height the Capitol be hurled."

But he finally sees that he cannot attain even this negative end with the " miscreant and cowardly horde," attached to him only through necessity and love of plunder. Then, and for the first time, his watchword becomes revenge : —

“Revenge for all the hopes and all the dreams,
Crushed for me by a hostile destiny !
Revenge for all my wrecked and wasted life.”

So, by the pettiness of circumstance, he is driven step by step from his ideal plans into negation, disappointment, and thirst for revenge, and thereby is his downfall justified.

But there is, as has been said, another cause to bring about this end, and it is to be found in Catiline's personality. For Ibsen has not made an ideal abstraction of his hero; he has indeed bestowed upon him a variety of personal qualities which raise him high above the crowd; he makes him resolute, courageous, sympathetic, and truth-loving, and beyond all this, he has given him the ideal craving to rise above his surroundings; but he has endowed him besides with passions of the wildest sort. Ibsen did not for a moment doubt that Sallust and Cicero are right in saying that Catiline had led a lawless existence, and given himself over to the wildest of excess. So there is a split in his personality, a contradiction in his nature, that influences the shaping of his destiny.

Finally, then, Catiline appeared to Ibsen a man with great plans and a strong thirst to accomplish something great and good, but unsupported by his environment, and without the purity of character

and the energy of volition that are needful for the accomplishment of a lofty purpose. So that Ibsen has good cause to say, in the preface to the second edition: "Many things and much upon which my later work has turned — the contradiction between endowment and desire, between capacity and will, at once the entire tragedy and comedy of mankind and of the individual — may here be dimly discerned."

In the piece this contradiction appears not only in Catiline's character, it becomes incarnate in two women, Aurelia and Furia. These are rather two principles than two characters, disputing for the possession of the hero at the same time that they are struggling within him. It might almost be said that in these two women his thoughts and feelings take shape. Aurelia, his wife, is depicted as his better self; she has the power, at certain moments, of drawing out all that is tender and gentle in his disposition. The vestal Furia, on the other hand, has an equally great, but very different power over him; she represents his wild and passionate desires; she inspires him to both deed and misdeed. She is at once an amazon, calling him to battle for great ends, and a goddess of vengeance, driving him on to destruction. Of this she is fully conscious, for, although she loves Catiline, her constant thought is to be revenged

upon him, — for he has seduced her sister, Silvia, and thus been the cause of her death.

But, abstract and formal as is the conception of these two figures, there may be traced in them the germ of the two female figures who long ruled over Ibsen's fancy, and who appear again and again in his imaginative work. Aurelia stands for the tender affection that sacrifices all and pardons all; she is the first sketch of a whole gallery of Ibsen's women; and, like all first sketches, this one is rough and overdrawn; her self-abnegation, gentleness, and tenderness know no bounds; she is in this respect superhuman. But the fundamental traits of later and allied creations are easily to be recognized in her.

Furia is also recognizable as the prototype of another important, if less numerous group. She is a wild and grandly conceived Valkyrie, and has, as such, the fundamental characteristics of Hjördis. When she thus discourses of her own life, —

“How empty is this uneventful life, —
Dim as the flame of an expiring torch!
A field how narrow for my great ambition,
For lofty purpose, and for wild desire!
All is contracted here within these walls;
Here life grows set and hope dies slowly out;
Here drowsily the day sinks to its end,
And never thought takes shape and grows to deed,” —

we get a distinct glimpse of Hjördis, in the distance. The difference is only this, that Furia is

confined to vestal service in the temple of the goddess, and Hjördis is tied to Gunnar's farm as his wife. When Furia, a moment afterward, proposes to Catiline that they fly together, to begin a new life, rich in thought and deed, in some far-off country, we involuntarily call to mind that Hjördis makes exactly the same proposition to Sigurd. They even have in common a thirst for vengeance upon the man whom they love, although the cause is different; and both end by stabbing him, to find in the world of shades that union that was denied them in life.

When "*Catilina*" was written Ibsen had read, as far as he can remember, no other dramatists but Holberg and Oehlenschläger. There are things in "*Catilina*" that might lead one to think of Shakspeare's Roman tragedies; in the closing act, especially, one is tempted to recall the last act of "*Julius Cæsar*;" but at that time Ibsen knew Shakspeare only by name, so there can be no question of influence from that quarter. He was accustomed to being, to a great extent, his own instructor in preparing for his examination; he was that also in his early dramatic efforts. This makes "*Catilina*" all the more remarkable, dramatically considered. He had not learned much of Oehlenschläger as yet; he had got from him the idea of the blank iambic pentameter verse,

and in his moulding of that verse there are various things that point to Oehlenschläger's influence. But Ibsen's restless spirit made it impossible for him to adhere to any system. After a while the pentameter unrhymed iambics become too monotonous for him; he seeks for a form more lyrical in character, and finds relief in long series of rhymed iambics, finding a haven at last in pompous trochaic strophes, turgidly lyrical in their movement.

The same characteristic restlessness appears in the scenic arrangement of the material. The three acts take us to no less than nine different spots; in the first act scenes are shifted with truly Shakspearean frequency, — there being five tableaux, or nearly as many as there are scenes. In the second act things are better managed, and there are but three changes of scene, while the entire third act passes in one place. The composition of the piece itself evidently contributed to the author's command of scenic arrangement. Still more characteristic is the dramatic development. There is no question of real counter-play, for not one of Catiline's opponents appears in the cast; action is reduced to a minimum, and dramatic situations are almost wanting. Furia, with her desire for revenge, only serves to hasten the development; the treason of Curtius results in a purely external catastrophe; and the duplicity of Lentulus is an

episode that has no influence upon the march of events. The conflict is altogether an internal one, and the development occurs only in Catiline's soul, yet it is not wholly without dramatic interest. In the energy with which is traced the psychological development, from Catiline's self-accusation in the first speeches, through his disappointments and perplexities, until the madness which finally clouds his brain, — in this energy a reader of the present day may discern, in spite of youthful awkwardness and youthful defects, the stuff of which the future master of the psychological drama was to be made.

“Catilina's” fate, when it left the author's hand, is generally known. Its formal defects being very apparent, it found favor with neither theatre nor publisher. The theatrical management politely but firmly rejected it, and among the publishers “the one making the most favorable offer demanded such and such a sum for printing the piece without any promise of *honorarium*.” When it eventually was printed in Christiania, at the expense of an enthusiastic and self-denying friend, its fate was not much more cheerful. It excited a little attention and aroused some interest in student circles, but the critics found it immature, and the public was entirely indifferent to it. While people poured into the theatre to witness such a trifle as

"In the Mountain Pasture,"¹ as good as no one cared to purchase the promising maiden effort of an author destined later to become the foremost dramatist of Norway, and one of the most striking figures in literature. Although one of the local authorities in æsthetical matters, Prof. M. J. Monrad, undertook to reply to the critics, and expressed himself in praise of the piece, there were only about thirty copies sold altogether. One of the few people who found a use for the book was a huckster who discovered it to be very well fitted for use as wrapping-paper, and at the time of Ibsen's first sojourn in Christiania bought from him and his friend a large number of copies, one evening when their stomachs were as empty as their purses.

"For a few days following we lacked none of the necessaries of life," Ibsen remarks laconically.

The picture which "Catilina" gives us of Henrik Ibsen at the age of twenty is deeply interesting, but, as I have already suggested, the nature of his material and the restrictions of the dramatic form compelled him to set Catiline so far apart from himself that but a few points of resemblance remain between the author and his hero. So by the aid of "Catilina" alone it is impossible to get a distinct picture of the young poet. Other materials are needed; expressions of

¹ "Til Sæters," — a vaudeville very popular at that time.

a more personal character are required, — in other words, letters or poems.

It follows as a matter of course that Ibsen, during his stay in Grimstad, wrote other poems than the political appeal referred to in the preface to "*Catilina*;" but of these early lyric efforts almost nothing got into print. Two poems in the "*Christiania Post*," one of them being a copy of verses in memory of Oehlenschläger, are all that I know of, and they help us very little. Ibsen himself has not preserved a single line of manuscript from that period; when he mentions his political poems in the preface to "*Catilina*" he does it from memory, adding a cautious "as far as I can recollect."

Through a very fortunate combination of circumstances I discovered, however, that his youthful poems were not lost. Quite a number of such poems are still in existence, and they serve to fill out the sketch of the young poet, outlined by "*Catilina*," in the most interesting manner.

The collection consists of twenty-six poems neatly written in a small bound volume. One of them dates from 1847 — that is from Ibsen's nineteenth year, — three from 1848, thirteen from 1849, and the remaining nine from 1850. Nearly all of them were written at Grimstad, only two or three having come into being after his departure from that town.

It would be natural to expect such a collection of juvenile poems to contain many suggestions derived from reading, especially as we know from other sources that their poet developed into full self-consciousness at a much later date. And yet these poems are far less literary than might be thought. In form they are marked by an ease hardly to be expected of the author of "Catilina," yet not very characteristic. But in matter they are all the more so.

At that time Welhaven set the tone for Norwegian lyrical poetry. His "Later Poems" (1845) had made an epoch in romantic poetry and the poetry of nature. They were "spirit ballads" of the romantic school, with its predilections for the middle ages; and with them the nymph-lyric, with its symbolical conception of nature, had come to the front.

Only once do we notice in Ibsen's work any influence from this quarter, and that is in a poem on "The Miller Boy," which is written in the conventional manner of the period, and provided with singing nymphs, harp-playing nixies, and other romantic apparatus. Aside from this, Ibsen remains uninfluenced by the tendency of the time, — he even sets himself in opposition to it, fully conscious of what he is about. In a poem "To the Bards of Norway," dating from early in 1850, he

asks the poets why they so worship the past ages, "old days enshrined with mouldering memories;" has not the gift of song been granted them —

"To serve mankind,
Who would within the poet's inspired song,
Their joys, their sorrows, and their longings find?"

They sang often enough of nature in Norway, but how came they to forget the Norwegian heart? There lies a treasure worthy the quest of Norwegian poetry, whose aim should be to portray the life of the people.

In this first poetic programme Ibsen's own future work is foreshadowed, although it was not destined to take the form of an epic presentation of the life of the people.

For the rest, he made at that time no attempt to write poetry in harmony with his theories. The poems of his "Catilina" period are all purely personal; they are concerned with his own moods, thoughts, and impressions.

Hardly a trace of the future satirist is to be noticed; a mild attempt at satirical description of a ball is the only instance of this sort.

The fundamental mood of these poems is elegiac rather than satirical. Many of them have a cast of gentle, dreamy melancholy. The repose of night, rather than the turmoil of day, appeals to their author, and he is one of those for whom moon-

beams are more poetical than sunlight. No less than six of the poems in this collection are the reflection of moonlight moods. "Moonlight on the Sea," "A Moonlight Musing," "A Moonlight Stroll after the Ball," — these are titles that need no further explanation. The last-named of these pieces has a special interest, inasmuch as it contains the motive of one of the most remarkable of Ibsen's later poems.

"Hush, how quiet! from the ball-room stream those joyous tones
no more,
And the sounds that pierced the silence of the night time now
are o'er.

"In the far-off west the moonbeams faint and ever fainter grow,
While the earth forgetful sleeps beneath the lilies of the snow.

"But although the ball is over, yet my thoughts still linger long
On the memory of a sylph-like figure flitting midst the
throng.

"Soon the moon shall set, and I with sleep's strong arms encompassed be,
And my soul, with memory's treasure laden, glide o'er dream-
land's sea."

As we may see, the motive of "Away" lies ready to hand in this poem, but it is to undergo a characteristic transformation and in place of the moonlight we are to have a cheerless night, dark and windy. Dr. Georg Brandes has taken occasion to remark concerning "Away" and a

few others among Ibsen's loveliest poems, that "at some time in the battle of life a lyrical Pegasus was slain under him." If it may truthfully be said that the author of the fourth act of "Brand" and of the scene of Aase's death in "Peer Gynt" ever had his "lyrical Pegasus" slain, these elegiac poems of his youth, in spite of their shortcomings, will at least bear witness that it once had life. They are the work of a writer whose native sensibilities have not as yet been tempered by that heat of which Ibsen was to sing later, in "Memory's Might."

But if he had not yet become hardened, his natural reserve had become developed. There is in these poems nothing of the social instinct common to youth; there are no songs in which the author speaks for others; he always says "I," never "we;" although many be present he is everywhere alone.

And he is everywhere the introspective muser, with whom the thought has a greater value than the reality underlying it. He has intercourse with actuality only that his intellectual and emotional life may be fructified thereby; as soon as this is accomplished, actuality no longer concerns him. The poet whose prophetic fancy saw thrones falling at the assault of the hosts of freedom is really occupied much more with the past than with the

future. Not hope, but memory, is the theme of his youthful song.

At times he dwells upon autumn, and voices the poet's old complaint that the splendor of summer should have been so brief, and that the flowers should have withered; but then he finds consolation in the thought that one flower remains in its fairest bloom, the flower of memory, which bears the promise of another spring.

Or he dwells upon the memory of spring itself; true, it is short, but it lives in the recollection, and thus it is with human life. The joy of life is as a brief springtime, but the heart-strings long vibrate plaintively to its memory.

"The tones are ours,
And linger long;
They tell of flowers,
And springtide song."

The political poems dwell upon the importance of memory in the life of the people; it sustains a nation in times of adversity. It is an unhappy people that cannot look to a noble past for the "consolations of memory."

He subdues his sorrow at a friend's departure by evoking memories of their friendship to shed a mild radiance upon the hour of leave-taking; and in another poem he suggests memory as the lover's refuge in the absence of the beloved one.

Like Falk in "Love's Comedy," he has a far stronger belief in the uplifting influence of loss and of memory than in that of happy possession. Happiness may be but brief, or it may become hackneyed, which means that it ceases to be happiness. When we read all this glorification of memory, we involuntarily recall Brand's words, —

"What we win is ours never,
What we lose we gain forever."

We see how far back in Ibsen's life this thought reaches, and we understand how deep-seated it must have been in a nature as introspective and inclined to the ideal as his.

But the collection also embraces poems which are not so gentle and elegiac in their character. There are poems showing that Ibsen, at the age of twenty, had already begun to exhibit that leaning towards the gloomy, the weighty, and the serious, that was afterwards to count for so much in his poetry.

We find not only moonlight, but the blackest of night as well, in these poems. He dwells, for example, upon the dismalness of a thunder-storm, or he spends a dark autumn evening gazing into the fire, while the storm is raging without, and the rain beating upon the pane. He takes an evening stroll to some remote and gloomy recess of the forest, and there, when the storm arises and min-

gles its roar with the hooting of the owl, he feels himself at home, and feels "the wild terror" that seizes upon him to be his proper element.

"Here in this wild and stormy place
My soul at last finds rest,
And here to me seems Nature's face
Reflected from my breast."

Finally he pictures to himself the midnight hour in the churchyard, and with this thought there becomes mingled the old belief in the Dance of Death. The clock in the church tower strikes twelve, and, as in Goethe's "*Der Todtentanz*" and Saint-Saens's "*Danse Macabre*," the dead creep up out of their graves and perform their wild dance in the churchyard. Bones beat time, and skulls are drummed upon, until the clock strikes one and the dead scurry back under their stones. So that even Ibsen's well-known "affinity for the dismal" is thus seen to date back to his early youth.

It is no less interesting to notice the early ripening of his reflective powers. In a poem entitled "Doubt and Hope," written in his twentieth year, he already assumes a sceptical attitude towards the dogmas of the church. This may not be a very striking phenomenon, but it is certainly unusual to find a youth of twenty reflecting upon his doubts, and made unhappy by them. It is unusual for a

doubter of twenty to complain that he is no longer a child; that he no longer has the child-like mind that in faith sees the way he cannot now find.

And it is quite as unusual to find a poet of twenty, — the age of self-confidence and of magnificent plans for the future, — doubting his own powers, and giving expression to this doubt in his poetry. In the oldest poem of the collection, "Resignation," the author asks himself if his dream of poetic success be but a phantom, and seems very much inclined to answer the question affirmatively. As a consequence, he sings in melancholy stanzas of the foaming wave, that swells and rolls onward, but breaks at last against the cliff, leaving no trace behind, since the waves that follow after completely efface it.

Such were the thoughts and fancies with which Henrik Ibsen, as a young man, occupied his hours of solitude. And he was quite as different from the generality of young people when in the company of others. He himself tells us that his political enthusiasm overflowed at times, and led him to express himself freely, but this certainly did not happen very often. As a rule he was more given to the formation than to the expression of his thoughts. A lady who at that time lived at Grimstad relates that he went about like an enigma, secured with seven seals. He made a serious,

gloomy, almost dismal impression. A few of his female friends tried to make out what in the world there was in this remarkable man; others could not help being afraid of him. There was nothing strange in this, for it would be difficult to imagine any one less likely to play the cavalier according to the standard of the village maiden.

Imagine him, for example, taking part in a ball. While the other young men give themselves up to boisterous mirth, he stands apart and reflects upon all the sorrow concealed beneath this smiling exterior, and upon the number of dancers who seek in the waltz forgetfulness of their sufferings. He even finds a certain pleasure in dwelling upon these thoughts, and they are for him an element in the poetry of the ball no less essential than the dancing and merriment.¹ And in his solitary corner he further muses: "What is it that animates all these joyous and smiling faces?" he asks himself. "They have come hither expecting contentment and pleasure; have they found what they sought? Does not the ball rather present an ideal picture of the great drama of human life?"

"And what is this ideal?"

"Anticipation, hope, and disappointment!"

¹ This and what follows is taken *verbatim* from a section of the collection, entitled "Ball Memories: a Fragment from Life in Poetry and Prose."

“In these three words behold the whole story of human life!”

He to whom, at so early an age, come such thoughts at the sight of human enjoyment, has already taken his place among the outsiders; he is not made for the fulness of life and its pleasures; his genius and his experience have already stamped him as the solitary musér.

And even in case he feels inclined to mingle with the throng, even if he feel himself attracted to some individual, he will hastily draw back into himself, like the mimosa, closing its leaves at the least touch.

Erotic moods also occur in his “Ball Memories,” but of their own peculiar sort. He has written erotic poems before, but to no terrestrial woman, — rather to a “dream vision,” evoked by an unsatisfied and perhaps insatiable desire. Not even are her individual features those of any human form. But at the ball he meets the glance of a pair of pretty eyes, and the ideal straightway becomes real; just thus has he pictured to himself the woman whom he might love. He dances with her, is intoxicated by her bright eyes, and is in the seventh heaven of delight. “What is all the strife and disappointment of a man’s lifetime weighed against a half-hour like this?” But this is the crown of the whole matter for him. “Fate!

take from me this excess of joy; let not this hour be lengthened and made desecrate. I have found her; what would I more?" And fate grants his prayer; he learns that she is betrothed, and thus has she fulfilled her mission for him; she has taught him anticipation, hope, and disappointment; further developments do not require her presence, for they take place within, and memory serves.

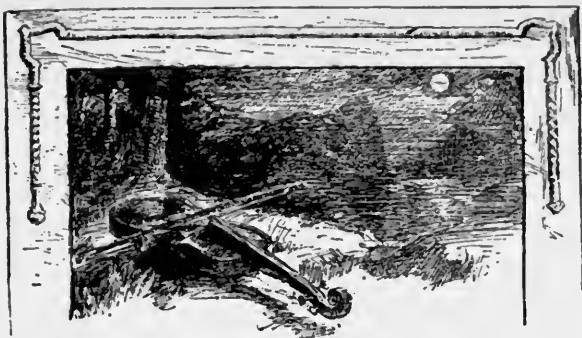
In this psychological process, so characteristic of Ibsen's nature, idealistic and even averse to actuality, do we not recognize Falk's longing for a bride? How characteristically and genuinely Falk-like is the cry, "Let not this hour be lengthened and made desecrate!" This is a sort of affection almost wholly unconcerned with reality. It begins as an ideal dream, touches upon reality in a ball-room passion, and returns as a memory to the region of the ideal. It is like one of those comets that, after wandering through the ether for ages, touch for a moment on the earth's orbit, and then resume their course through empty space.

Such is the picture of Henrik Ibsen that is given us by his first poems. It is only in a special sense that they may be called youthful poems, for if they reveal to us anything it is the fact that their author had no real youth. He had the ideal

longings and the enthusiasm of youth, but he never knew that careless joy which is its most characteristic mark; he was never one of those for whom, to use his own phrase, "sport is enough."

But youth seldom owns such a wealth of possibilities as were his. All of those genial gifts which he developed as a poet, exist in embryo in these youthful verses.

Many years and much strife were needed, however, to bring them to their full development.



II.

APPRENTICESHIP.

IN the month of March, 1850, Henrik Ibsen went to Christiania to finish reading for his examination and to "go up."

Like all others who sought a short cut to the university in those days, he became a pupil in Heltberg's school, a "student factory," in which raw material of the most diverse character was, in a year or two, fashioned into available student-shape by that original and genial teacher.

A great deal has been written about Heltberg, his school, and his methods of instruction. Björnson has celebrated his old teacher in a charming poem, Arne Garborg has given an animated description of the school and its teachers, and no one who has written Ibsen's biography has failed to mention that Aasmund Olafssøn Vinje and Björnson were Ibsen's schoolmates.

All the contemporary testimony is unanimous in describing Heltberg's instruction as unusually interesting and stimulating. Latin and logic meant the same thing for him, and it was the laws of thought that he sought to reveal to his pupils as they worked through the difficult sentences and the refined periods of the Roman writers. Thus it came about that his instruction was always perspicuous and entertaining. He always had a striking figure at hand when some grammatical peculiarity was to be explained, or some blunder pointed out, and he made so witty a use of it that the whole class shook with laughter.

That Ibsen found his account, both as man and Latinist, in the instruction of this master, goes without saying; but the influence cannot have been very great, for his school-days were brief. He was older than the average of *artium* candidates, and poorer than most of them; so he was compelled to prepare for examination as speedily as possible. After the lapse of a few months he offered himself for the test. Naturally, under these circumstances, the result was not remarkably brilliant.

But while he was still at school, he appeared once more before the public. He took occasion to make display of his revolutionary sym-
pa-

thies again, and set out to write a new dramatic work.

A South Jutlander named Harro Harring had come to Norway in 1849. His previous life had been adventurous, and he had taken part in the Greek struggle for freedom, and in other uprisings. Early in 1850 he published a play, "The Testament of America." This was thought by the authorities to overstep the limits of freedom accorded to the press, and he was banished from the country, the 27th of May, 1850, by royal edict. On the morning of the 29th, the police entered his dwelling, seized his person, and put him aboard a steamer, where he was held under guard until its departure.

When the report of this spread about town, a meeting was called for 5 P. M. to protest against the action taken. A written protest was drawn up, and received about 140 signatures then and there. Henrik Ibsen was one of those present who signed it. His seventeen-year-old school-mate, Björnstjerne Björnson, did the same.

Those assembled at the meeting then proceeded in a body to the residence of the chief minister, and through a deputation presented the address. Then they went down to the wharves; the deputation boarded the steamer, and addressed a few words to Harring. When he showed himself on deck,

three times three cheers were given him. And cheers were also given for fatherland and freedom. Ibsen shared heartily from beginning to end in this improvised demonstration, — the only political demonstration, in fact, in which he ever took part.

It was at about this time that he wrote his second play. He spent his Whitsuntide holidays in writing out a little single-act drama, "The Warrior's Tomb," which was accepted by the Christiania theatre, and performed September 26th of that year.

"The Warrior's Tomb" is far from being as interesting a work as "Catilina." Both in form and contents it is an impersonal study in the manner of Oehlenschläger's Northern tragedies.

A Norse viking, Audun, when upon a piratical expedition against the coast of Normandy, is sorely wounded, and deserted by his followers. A little girl, Blanka, who has escaped murder at the hands of the wild vikings, finds and cares for him. When his wounds are healed, he builds a rude hut, and lives there as a hermit with his foster-daughter, who converts him to Christianity. The new faith gives him a horror of the viking life, and, in witness that his old career is at an end, he buries his sword and armor, raising a mound over the spot. Many years afterward, his son Gandalf comes to Normandy to avenge his father's death. He is about

to slay both the hermit and Blanka, but the gentle and forgiving spirit that her words reveal makes the duty of vengeance too heavy for him; and, that he may not break his vow either to be avenged or die, he is about to consecrate himself to death. Then Audun casts off his hermit garb, and explains the real state of affairs. Gandalf returns to Norway bearing Blanka as his bride, but Audun remains behind, choosing to pursue his hermit existence to the end.

All three of these figures have their parallels in Oehlenschläger's tragedies. The old viking, who ends his years as a hermit in the South, where one day his countrymen come upon him, is a figure offered us by Oehlenschläger several times. In "The Warings in Micklegarth" he occurs as the old Syrian hermit, who turns out to be Olaf Trygvason, and in the second act of "Land Found and Vanished," the same figure appears as the hermit Quetzacoatl, or the Icelfander Bjorn, who left his home when his beloved became another's wife. The contrast between Gandalf's Northern roughness and Blanka's Southern gentleness is also paralleled in the "Warings," by the contrast between Harald Haarderaade and Maria. Blanka is the express image of Maria. Both are children of the South; both admire the strength of the North; both love Northern heroes and would follow them

to Norway; and both consider it their task to exert a softening and elevating influence upon the people among whom they are to live. Only with Ibsen the situation is more essentially a contrast between Christianity and heathendom, while Oehlenschläger lays the stress upon the contrast between Greek civilization and the rude Norse strength.

Yet in spite of this influence, there is in Ibsen's conception of the viking period something that denotes a departure from Oehlenschläger, and gives promise of the future author of "The Chieftains of Helgeland." These vikings are more savage and fierce than their obvious prototypes; they are more barbarian, less civilized. It is noticeable enough that contemporary criticism, committed as it was to Oehlenschläger's conception of the Norse past, found them too rough and savage.

But the critics gave an encouraging welcome to the little work, and the public did not withhold its sympathy. It had three performances, which was a respectable number for the theatre as it then existed.

With the performance of "The Warrior's Tomb," at the Christiania theatre, Henrik Ibsen settled down as a Christiania man of letters. All thought of taking up his studies at the university was abandoned once for all.

Together with his friend, *Stud. Fur.* Schulerud, "Catilina's" publisher, he lived in a modest quarter of the capital. The *honorarium* for "The Warrior's Tomb" did not last long, and Schulerud's monthly allowance was anything but liberal. Nevertheless this devoted comrade shared fairly with his friend. "But it did not provide for dinner," relates Botten-Hansen, "and they could eat no such meal. In order that this might not become known, and they suffer loss of credit thereby at their lodgings, they used to go out at dinner-time, not returning until the people in the house might suppose that they had eaten. Then they drank their coffee, and ate with it some bread, and this had to pass for a dinner. At that time I met Ibsen and his chum almost daily; but they were so light-hearted and cheerful, knowing so well how to conceal their singular methods of economy, that I had no suspicion of it until long afterwards."

This steadfast and devoted friendship has pleasantly bound Schulerud's name with that of Ibsen; and the latter displayed his gratitude by introducing a beautiful memorial of his friend into the preface to the second edition of "Catilina." His personality does not seem to have been striking, and he does not seem to have risen intellectually above the common; but his unbounded devotion to his friend, and his unre-

served belief in his powers, doubtless had a beneficial effect upon Ibsen's nature, which was sceptical and given to self-criticism.

A very different sort of influence was that exerted by another dweller under the same roof, — Student Theodor Fredrik Abildgaard. He had given himself heart and soul to the labor movement which had been started by Marcus Thrane, as a consequence of the ideas awakened by the February Revolution. Abildgaard, who had soon become a leader in the movement, initiated both Ibsen and Schulerud into its mysteries. Ibsen did not occupy any well-defined standpoint with relation to the socialistic notions at the bottom of the agitation, nor did he unreservedly accept the opinions of its leaders. Their plans were too childish and fantastic. The whole affair was so illogical, so immature, and so stupidly managed that he could not wholly take its part. But the agitation appealed to him, because it had life and momentum. He went to the meetings, which were held in Abildgaard's rooms, associated with him and the other leaders, and wrote for the paper which they published.

After a while Abildgaard and Thrane were arrested and their papers seized. Since among them were manuscripts of Ibsen, he waited for a while in expectation of sharing the fate of his

friends, although what he had written was not of a very incendiary character, and he could not have been convicted for it. Thanks, however, to the presence of mind of one of the initiated, Ibsen escaped any inconvenience in the matter. When the police came, the superintendent of the newspaper office threw all the compromising manuscripts on the floor, while he concealed, with great solicitude, those which were unimportant. The police were thus led by the nose, and the matter, as far as Ibsen was concerned, arranged. The leaders did not fare so well, and were, after a long imprisonment, sentenced to hard labor for their socialistic propaganda.¹

Two other men must be named with whom Ibsen came into contact at this period of his life. They were Paul Botten-Hansen and Aasmund Olafssøn Vinje. It was with them that he commenced, at the beginning of the year 1851, the publication of a little weekly paper, whose title-page bore the resounding name of "The Man."

Both his co-editors were older than Ibsen; his *artiums* schoolmate Vinje was thirty-three, and Botten-Hansen twenty-six. Although they

¹ Shortly after leaving prison, Thrane came to America, where he lived for the remainder of his life. He died at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, April 30, 1890, at the age of 73. — TR.

could not boast, like Ibsen, of any special literary gift, they were certainly both superior to him at this time, both in knowledge and general development.

Botten-Hansen had already laid the foundation of his comprehensive acquaintance with foreign literature, and had busied himself especially with young Germany, whose writers he made the subject of a series of articles published in the paper. Vinje was not so well read, but his keen and individual intelligence had ripened, and he had gained a fund of thought and experience in the hard struggle for existence, under shifting conditions, that had been his lot. Intercourse and work with these two men doubtless had a stimulating influence upon Ibsen's spiritual development.

The model for "The Man" was found in Goldschmidt's "The Corsair," that had in many ways aroused attention in Norway. There was a certain resemblance between "The Corsair" and "The Man," not only in their externals, but also in their political attitude. "The Man," like "The Corsair," was of the opposition without supporting the opposition as it then existed, and when it wrote in justification of the charge brought against Goldschmidt, that he had not enlisted in the service of any principle, it wrote at the same

time in justification of its own course. Vinje was the one who, on behalf of the editors, broke a lance for Goldschmidt with a Norwegian writer, who had taken up the old charge. It was a mark of Goldschmidt's greatness, said Vinje, that he belonged to neither of the opposed parties; for connection with a distinct party means loss of independence and spiritual enslavement. Genius is solitary; it has this in common with irrationality, — that it does not appeal to the average man, but after a while it comes to be understood. This article, which shows us Vinje as an enthusiastic admirer of Goldschmidt, bears an interesting relation to those views of the relation between the majority and the individual which afterward found expression in Ibsen's work.

When "The Man" joined issue both with the government party and the opposition, it was by no means because the paper occupied a middle standpoint between the two opposing extremes. It was, on the contrary, because the paper was more fully in opposition than the opposition itself; because it considered the opposition to be lax and without character. In the twenty-three-year old editor of 1851 there are already suggestions of the author of "An Enemy of Society;" and his ideas upon the political situation at this

time find vent in a satirical production that takes a noticeable place among his youthful works.

With his head full of the liberal ideas of the period, blazing with zeal for the opposition, and glowing with revolutionary enthusiasm, Ibsen had come to the capital. In this centre of Norwegian intellectual life he doubtless expected to find fully re-echoed all that was ringing in his brain. His first act was to take part in a demonstration, his next to join in friendship with the most radical of the radicals. That this acquaintance was unable to offer him what he sought, I have already explained.

But in the national assembly the restless ferment of the time must surely find expression! The opposition in the Storting¹ must be a worthy object for his enthusiasm. It did not matter much what it was opposed to; the main thing was that its opposition should be strong and manful. But in this respect the opposition party in the Storting of 1851 was anything but a grateful object for a young poet's enthusiasm.

In 1848, it had indeed, for a moment, looked as if the political commotion of the period was not going to pass over without having some effect upon the leaders of the opposition in the Storting. But in the interval between the adjournment

¹ The general assembly of the two legislative houses, the Odelsting and Lagthing.

of the Storting in 1848 and the opening of the next Storting in 1851 there had happened many things not exactly calculated to inspire the tame Norwegian opposition with courage. Tranquillity had been generally restored in Europe, and the leaders of revolt brought to punishment. The Norwegian opposition in the Storting of 1851 was, in consequence, the weakest and most tractable opposition in the world.

The impression that all this made upon Ibsen was one of disappointment. For the first time in his life he came to realize that the ideal was very different from the real, in great matters as well as in small. For the first time he stood face to face with the "Spirit of Compromise." This weakened opposition filled him with scorn, its members seemed to him narrow-minded and petty, and so he wrote "Norma; or a Politician's Love," a musical tragedy in three acts. His first disappointment called forth his first satire.

This youthful and outspoken piece of polemics is based upon Bellini's "Norma." Political notabilities take the place of the characters of the opera, and the most powerful blows are dealt out. In the figure of Norma, the opposition in general is derided as characterless, while at the same time several members of the Storting are singled out by name and branded as fortune-hunters.

His other poetic contributions to the paper are of no great interest. Five of the poems which later found a place in his one volume of collected verse may be found here in their original form, which is different enough from the final one. Some of them, as "The Fiddler," "Bird and Bird-Catcher," and "The Miner," show that his inclination for the gloomy and uncanny was growing.

For the rest, his poems in "The Man" showed little independence. In a romantic cycle, "Helge Hundingsbane," he chose for a model Oehlenschläger's romantic style, as it appears in "Helge" and "The Gods of the North." In "A Saturday Evening at Hardanger," he endeavored to depict a scene from the life of the Norwegian peasant, in octaves that show him to have been strongly influenced by Paludan-Müller; they really give us the latter's "Dancing-Girl" in Norwegian costume. Another poem, "The Swan," betrays both in form and matter the influence of A. Munch's "Where I Wander about in the South, in the West." The unconscious originality that distinguished Ibsen's first effort, has almost disappeared; he has come under the influence of the study of literature.

After a lapse of two quarters, the paper took the name of "Andhrimner," after the cook of Valhalla, who provided the Northern gods with

their daily food, and it became at the same time a general review of literature and politics; but in neither form did it gain any circulation among the public, and never had a hundred subscribers at any one time. At the close of the third quarter it was forced to suspend publication.

After living in Christiania for a year and a half, and after having successively tried his hand at dramatic composition, lyric poetry, political satire, criticism, and editorial work, Ibsen's position was still as uncertain as ever.

His appearance had, however, awakened some attention, and won for him a certain reputation; and so, when the newly built theatre at Bergen was looking about for a stage-manager, the choice fell upon him. The 6th of November, 1851, he was appointed "theatre poet" of the Bergen stage, and in the following year, the theatre granted him a travelling stipend of 200 specie dalers, and three months' leave of absence, that he might make himself practically acquainted with the details of stage-management abroad. This stipend was made conditional upon his assuming, after his return, the stage-managership for a period of five years.

The compensation was very small, — only three hundred specie dalers a year; but it assured him a modest support, and, what was still more

important, the new position gave him abundant opportunity for dramaturgical studies.

It has been said that the dramatic poet is born, not made. "One may through study become a painter, a sculptor, or a musician, but not a dramatic author," says so prominent a member of the profession as Alexandre Dumas *fils*, in the preface to "Un Père Prodigue." "One must be that at once or never, just as one is dark or fair, whether he will or not."

If this were true, the dramatic talent would offer a singular exception to the laws of development to which all living things, both natural and spiritual, are subordinated; but these laws admit of no exceptions. There is a law to the effect that a faculty is developed by exercise, and that without exercise it remains undeveloped or retrogrades. This law holds good for the dramatic faculty as for any other; indeed, if we come right to the point, it holds good in the dramatic more truly than in the other literary fields, because skill and technique are of greater importance in the drama than in other forms of the poetic art.

And this technique is not to be acquired by means of theoretical investigations; it must be studied practically. A piece must be studied from the first rehearsal to its presentation before the public; its development upon the stage must be

watched ; and the manager must realize it for himself until he feels himself identified with the author ; he must form a conception of its effect, and of how that effect is to be produced, — and all this before that final test of the work which the first performance gives. This performance will, as a rule, bring many interesting surprises ; things which were expected to “do themselves,” fall flat, and things to which little attention has been paid, score a success. Where only a smile was expected, loud laughter is heard, and the reverse. One tries to account for all this ; in other words, one begins to understand and learn. The next time one is wiser, but there still remains much that is surprising, much to learn ; and should one even devote his whole life to the task he will never become so certain as to be able to positively foretell how each detail of a dramatic work will look upon the stage. But gradually this result is reached, that one learns to see his own or another’s plays as they will appear, while writing or reading them.

The importance of the fact that Henrik Ibsen came into close relations with the stage at an early period of his life cannot be strongly enough emphasized. If it had not been for this relation, he would never have attained to that technical mastery of dramatic composition which is now justly

admired in his works. For about ten years he was bound to the Norwegian theatre in the capacity of stage-manager, and during this time produced at least a hundred pieces. It was a good school to graduate from. It was naturally a very motley collection of works that he thus practically studied; it included Shakspeare and Holberg, Oehlenschläger and Heiberg, his own and Björnson's youthful works, and, more important still, the works of contemporary French dramatic literature, — Scribe especially, whose technique was not without its influence, although, in literary respects, he could not be very partial to the Scribe repertoire.

He did not concern himself greatly with dramatic studies of a theoretical description. He read Heiberg's prose writings, especially the noted essay on the vaudeville, and he got hold, while on his travels, of Hermann Hettner's "The Modern Drama," which had just appeared, and which he found to be a very interesting and stimulating book. This was about the whole of his theoretical reading.

In Christiania he had been able to see conscientious, if not genial acting. The Danish theatre of the Norwegian capital was not without a number of talented actors; and they, with the less gifted artists of the theatre, were bound to-

gether by a definite artistic tradition. They were all more or less intimately related with the great age of Danish acting, which dated from as early as, if not earlier than, the beginning of the century; and even if this acting had a somewhat ideal character, it possessed many substantial virtues, and its study must have been instructive for a young dramatist.

Then there were the impressions gained during Ibsen's stay in Copenhagen and Dresden during the summer of 1852. These were impressions of a wholly different sort. It so happened that this period was a stirring one both for the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen and for the Dresden theatre. In both Copenhagen and Dresden the academical and idealist tendency still ruled. In the former city it was represented by a director like Johan Ludvig Heiberg; in the latter by a leader like the elegant and tasteful artist Emil Devrient. But in both places a younger artistic talent had made its way to the stage, and introduced a new principle, that of realism. In Dresden this principle was represented by the restless and energetic Pole, Dawison, and in Copenhagen by the intelligent and finely gifted Höedt. Höedt's artistic watchword was nature, and Dawison's, passion; but, unlike as they were in temperament and artistic attitude, they waged in common the

battle against idealist declamation and academical decorum. Ibsen, who was enabled to see them both, thus for the first time became acquainted with a new artistic impulse, which corresponded with the new tendency in the dramatic literature of the period. He saw both Höedt and Dawson play "Hamlet," and was especially captivated by the latter's performance; while on the other hand, Höedt's acting afforded him more satisfaction in the comic part of the lover Grignon, in Scribe's "Bataille de Dames."

At home in Bergen the stage had no such fruitful impressions to give him; things were only in their beginnings, but it must nevertheless have been both pleasing and instructive to observe young talents like those of Johannes Brun, Louise Brun, and Lucie Johannesen in their early development.

The theatre at Bergen was one of the fruits of the national enthusiasm that reigned during the forties and fifties. The treasures of popular poetry that Asbjørnsen and Moe had brought to light had put the public into a condition of national ecstasy, and the watchword was, a Norwegian art and a Norwegian poetry. The painters should choose Norwegian subjects, the musicians should play or improvise upon Norwegian airs, and the poets should depict the Norwegian people, past and

present. The style of the folk-song became the literary model, and the Norwegian peasant the literary ideal.

The spirited Bergeners were in no wise left behind by the dwellers at the capital; they were, on the contrary, the more zealous, when it came to a display of national sympathies. In the town's places of public recreation, the ladies appeared wearing the national colors, and enthusiastically listened to the melodies of "The Pasture Maiden's Sunday," while all the people gathered in the theatre to admire fiddle-playing and Halling¹-dancing by genuine Norwegian peasants, and the singing and declamation of imitation peasants in a light vaudeville like "In the Mountain Pasture."

This national sentiment was felt even by the author of "Catilina," cosmopolitan as were his inclinations; and he turned from those crises in the world's history that had interested him as apprentice and student, to devote himself wholly to national themes. He had, however, a keen insight into the on-sidedness and, superficiality of the national movement, and, although joining with it, he could not refrain from an ironical treatment of certain of its aspects. When in Christiania he had already, in a dramatic criticism, expressed his opinion as to what should be the

¹ From Hallingdal, a country district of Norway. — TR

aims of a national literature. "The national writer," he had said, "is the one who understands how to impart to his work the fundamental tone that greets us from mountain and valley, from hillside and shore, and that, most important of all, is heard within the depths of our own being." All those external attributes of nationalism, by which the period set such store, were in his eyes like so much tinsel stuck upon the outside. But as a poet he was not yet prepared to take this standpoint, and the first dramatic fruit of the influence exerted upon him by the national movement turned out to be a singular union of realism with national romanticism, having a firm foothold neither in the romantic nor the real.

"St. John's Night," produced at the Bergen theatre the 2d of January, 1853, has never been printed, and exists only in one or two inaccessible manuscript copies. I know the piece only through a synopsis of the action given in Blanc's history of the Bergen theatre, and, as far as it is possible to judge of the piece from this synopsis, it is not without a few points of resemblance to "A Midsummer Night's Dream." In it the nixies play the part of prologue and fly-wheel of the action, about as Puck does in Shakspeare, and the elves and hill-folk appear in the more lyrical

portions. But in spite of this romantic machinery, the real characters in the piece are every-day people of the period, just as they are in "Master and Pupil," and several of Hostrup's other works of that time.

The scene is laid upon a farm in Thelemarken, where ladies and students have assembled on St. John's eve. A betrothal is about to be announced, and in celebration of the occasion punch is brought into the garden. Here the nixies come in and express the juice of a mysterious plant into the punch-bowl. Whoever drinks of this juice is no longer dazzled by outward appearances; the scales drop from his eyes, and he beholds "the inner life, that sits in the secret recesses of the soul; "

"But those whose minds have nought to ponder,
Blind or asleep as before, still wander."

After the two couples in the piece have partaken of the punch, they stroll out to the St. John's hill, where the mountain opens for those whose sight has been made clear, so that they see the mountain king surrounded by dancing elves and hill-folk. The prosaic natures, on the other hand, see only girls and boys dancing about a St. John's fire, and take the mountain king for a member of the festival committee. A romantic

poet is one of these common-place people. A play of elective affinities now takes place, under the influence of the magic draught of the nixies; the poetically inclined natures now understand each other, and are brought together in spite of the betrothal that had separated them before, while those of prosaic disposition also join forces. At the same time an ancient wrong that had been done the romantic lover is discovered and righted, and all is brought to a satisfactory ending.

The performance of this piece was not a success, and its importance in the development of the author can hardly be considered greater than that of a study.

A noticeable proof of the influence upon Ibsen of his practical activity in stage matters was furnished two years later, when his next dramatic work came before the public. The work shows that his theatrical occupations had enabled him to profit by some of the principles developed by Hermann Hettner in his little book. Hettner had condemned with great force the loose sort of chronicle play that had been called forth by admiration of Shakspeare's "histories," and had emphasized the necessity for employing strict rules of composition, and for making of the historical drama a "psychological tragedy of character," if it were to pass for a work of genuine art.

"Fru Inger of Oestraat" is just such a psychological tragedy of character, and the composition is worked out so energetically that the unities both of time and place are preserved, the entire action taking place in a single night upon Fru Inger's estate. In spite of a few long scenes there is in the development of the action a dramatic power that holds the attention from first to last in an iron grasp, while the gloom, which is the fundamental mood of the piece, deepens from act to act, from the ghostly setting of the first act, through the sepulchral air of the scene which witnesses the separation of Eline and Nils Lykke, to Fru Inger's hallucinations and murder of her own son.

The period of Norwegian history treated by Ibsen in this play produces just such a gloomy impression upon us. It was the age of Norway's deepest abasement.

After Sverre's democratic rule had, in the thirteenth century, taken away the political influence of the Norwegian aristocracy, the noble families of the country continued to go down hill during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The families of the old chieftains became extinct one by one, and their possessions became gathered into fewer and fewer hands; but these great fortunes did not avail to stay the ruin that the process of social decay was steadily bringing on. Says Ernest Sars:



IBSEN'S BIRTHPLACE.

“This process may be said to have reached completion at the time when the movement of the Reformation reached the Scandinavian countries, since Norway was then completely bereft of a ruling class, having left only families of the lower nobility, which were raised above good peasant stock neither by wealth nor political traditions, and which could not command consideration beyond the limits of their own native districts.” But at that time the nobility was the only class able effectively to represent the people in political matters and others concerning their higher interests, so that the decline of the nobility meant the impotence of the nation. In consequence of this, Norway was at the beginning of the sixteenth century “more than ever like a bare trunk or a helpless wreck.” Such figures, suggestive of weakness and barrenness, are constantly falling from the lips of our historians, when they speak of the period in question.

In consequence of this dying at the top, there was no concern for the nation's welfare, no love of country among the Norwegians of that age. The last of the Norwegian nobles were Swedish-minded or Danish-minded, according to their personal relations and connections of kindred; none of them were Norwegian-minded. Even Knut Alfsön, so highly esteemed as a national martyr, was

merely a tool, whose connections by birth and marriage made him useful to the Swedes. The one man who speaks a patriotic language, and who seems really to feel for the abasement of his country, is Vincent Lunge. In his letters he speaks boldly, and more than once, of the wretchedness of the land and of the Norseman's sluggishness. But, characteristically enough, this one patriot was not a Norseman, but a Danish nobleman married into a Norwegian family; and his patriotism was, besides, little more than a cloak for his ambition, his covetousness, and his love of command. The charter which he and the other Norwegian state councillors obtained from Fredrik the First in 1523 was undoubtedly more favorable to the country than that granted by Kristjern the Second ten years previously; but it really amounted to little more than a meaningless scrap of parchment, soon disregarded by the king. The state council still existed, but it was "an institution almost without root, and without the force of will needed to enable it to play an independent part." Danish nobles established themselves in the country, got hold of the best places, possessed themselves, by marriage or other and less honorable means, of the richest estates, and dealt and ruled about as they pleased. The state of affairs was not far from being utterly lawless; violent

feuds, depredations, unpunished seizure of the property of others, plundering expeditions, and even regular petty warfare among the men in power, were the order of the day. Norway has never known another period as gloomy as this, and, if the old figure of a night four centuries long is to serve as a description of Norway's dependent age, then the beginning of the sixteenth century must stand for midnight.

In the gloomy drama that Ibsen unfolds for us, there appears, then, the spirit of this age, with its paralyzed forces and its dark intrigues, with its crushed hopes and its unrestrained passions, with its ghostly mood and its sepulchral horror.

No wonder that material like this should appeal to Ibsen, with his natural inclination for the dark and dismal! No wonder that in successfully presenting a living picture of that age, he was also successful, for the first time, in displaying his own personality!

But still another sentiment, the patriotic, attracted Ibsen to his material. The period of national awakening that came with the first half of the present century was a period that less than any other could contemplate unstirred the age of the Reformation. The sensitive new-born national feeling could not fail to be excited to grief and indignation by the thought of the nation's deep

degradation. That Ibsen was stirred by these feelings is seen by his having made them incarnate in Eline, the fairest creation of the play. The real Eline did not feel thus, — a Norwegian woman of that age hardly could have felt thus, — but with Ibsen she is the muse of the drama, and he represents in her the feeling of grief at the fate of the fatherland. It was difficult, in the first half of this century, to understand these Norsemen of the Reformation period; their dulness appeared inconceivable, and every trace of high-mindedness and patriotic feeling that was discerned, or thought to be discerned in them, was hailed with enthusiasm. Thus it was that Knut Alfssön was made into a national hero, and martyr for the love of his country. A. Munch glorifies him in "Pictures from North and South;" other authors admire him, and Ibsen's piece begins with his name: —

"Who was Knut Alfssön?"

"The last champion of Norway."

These are the opening lines of the play.

All things considered, there was felt a need to find some object for enthusiasm, something noble and high-minded, in that age so poor in enthusiasm, nobility, and high-mindedness. It was this need that impelled Ibsen to his conception of the principal character in the piece. About her he has clustered all the dreams of Norway's resurrec-

tion. He makes her stand forth by Knut Alfssön's bier, and swear that her life shall be consecrated to avenge the slain and give freedom to the land. From that moment all believe, herself included, that she is chosen to take up the work that fell from Knut Alfssön's hands on board Henrik Krummedike's ship. All look to her for the word, but she never utters it, for she becomes so bound that she dare not stir. Her love for Sten Sture brings her a son, who is sent to Sweden, and this son is her fate. Whenever she would step forth, fear for her son restrains her. This fear impels her to marry the decrepit Nils Gyldenlöve, and to bestow her daughters upon Danish knights; it is affection for this child that makes her lose the confidence of her fellow-countrymen, that draws her into perplexing and ambiguous situations, and that finally impels her to his murder, in the belief that she is striking at another who stands in his path. It is a greatly planned and boldly executed tragic creation.

But in fact, Fru Inger Ottesdatter was not a being of such heroic mould. She was the last descendant of the old chieftain stock to preserve her position, and she was in consequence the wealthiest person in the country. This fact and no other it is that gives her the place she occupies in history. When her life is examined, it is not

seen that patriotic considerations governed her actions in any way. The ruling motive in her actions was a far lower one; it seems to have been mainly a very strong ambition to increase her possessions and magnify her position. Time and again we see her seize upon estates that do not belong to her, and hold them until forced to restore them; when she marries her daughters to Danish nobles, it is because she finds her account in so doing, since these nobles are the most eligible matches that she can find; when she interests herself in a convent and does it services, she knows how to get well repaid in this world's goods; and even when she performs an act of benevolence, she looks for compensation. For example, she gives shelter to Peder Kansler from his pursuers, but she accepts from him a massive gold ring, a hundred Rhenish florins, and a quantity of rose nobles and Hungarian florins, and when she espouses later the cause of the "Dalejunker," it is because she has betrothed one of her daughters to him in the hope that he may become king of Sweden. In this and in other respects she is no worse than her age, but she is also no better; and, so far from feeling grief at having bestowed her daughters upon strangers, she has the most cordial relations with her step-sons, and allows herself to be led at will by Vincent Lunge, the oldest

of them, whom she regards as the head of the family after Nils Gyldenlöve's death.¹ It is from this unpromising material that Ibsen's poetical genius has shaped the magnificent tragic figure with which we are all acquainted.

It was not, however, until after the creation of Ibsen's drama that the life of Fru Inger Ottesdatter was fully cleared up by historical investigation, and, although some of her more characteristic features had been at the time pointed out, she was still partly enigmatical, and her story offered much room for conjecture and explanation. The way in which Ibsen accounts for her actions by making the "Dalejunker" the illegitimate fruit of her love for Sten Sture is as historically perverse as it is poetically genial. Every one knows that this was not the case. It is notorious, both that the "Dalejunker" was a cotter's son, and that Fru Inger and Vincent Lunge believed in the justice of his claims, hoping to win some advantage by attaching him to themselves, since the rumor was just then spread about that Gustav Vasa had died. But Ibsen has boldly risen superior to these facts, and what his piece has thereby lost in historical accuracy, it

¹ These historical sketches of the characters of the play are based upon Professor L. Daae's essay, "Fru Inger Ottesdatter and Her Daughters."

has gained many times over in tragic depth. It is the deep and despairing struggle in Fru Inger's soul between maternal affection and love of country that makes her the powerful tragic character she appears. Thus by perverting history Ibsen has won a great poetic victory.

He has dealt no less freely with the relation between the two characters which, next to that of Fru Inger, are the most important in the play, — those of Eline and Nils Lykke. The only fact that the poet has introduced is that of Nils Lykke's love for both Eline and her sister Lucia. He has altered everything else.

The real Nils Lykke was married to Eline Gyl-denlöve in 1528, who died after five years of wedlock, leaving her husband two children. After a time an affection grew between him and his sister-in-law Lucia, but this met with the most energetic opposition from the family, because the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister was then regarded as incestuous. All the prayers of Lucia and Nils Lykke were in vain, and a son having been born to them, poor Nils Lykke was imprisoned, convicted, and slain in prison in the year of our Lord 1535.

Ibsen either had no eye for the motive to be found in the story of love, or he could make no use of it. He set Lucia's love so far back in the

story that Eline becomes the second of the sisters to love Nils Lykke, and he has so altered their relations that they come to resemble those of Catiline with Furia. Like the latter, Eline loves the man who has been the cause of her sister's death, and hates the seducer, not knowing him to be one with her lover. And, like Catiline, Nils Lykke is represented by Ibsen as a libertine with whom one love affair more or less is of slight consequence. But here the resemblance ceases, for Eline's submission is as little like Furia's vengeance as Nils Lykke's crafty diplomacy is like Catiline's blind Berserker career. It is the fundamental relation, not the individual characterization, that Ibsen has brought forth again and utilized in this play.¹

As we see, Ibsen has handled the historical facts very freely. In this respect he has not followed Hettner, who maintains that historical tragedy must respect history. The words with which, in a postscript to "*Catilina*," Ibsen sets forth his

¹ It seems to me that Georg Brandes turns things upside down when, in his first characterization of Ibsen, he draws a parallel between Catiline and Nils Lykke, and says: "That nothing may be wanting in this resemblance the poet has taken the fundamental motive from '*Catilina*,'" etc. It is, in fact, the entire likeness that is wanting. Vasenius has also protested against thus drawing a parallel between Catiline and Nils Lykke. See Brandes, "*Æsthetic Studies*," and Vasenius, "*Ibsen's Dramatic Works*."

attitude towards the facts of history, might, with even greater justice, be applied to "Fru Inger of Oestraat." In this postscript he writes as follows: "Historical materials are utilized in part only, and as far as they may be considered to invest the central idea of the piece." And he very reasonably adds: "It is to be hoped that the author will be pardoned for having given historical names to persons who, both as to character and other circumstances, appear otherwise than history reveals them to us; and all the more because these names are hardly so conspicuous that their appearance under circumstances which history does not record should make a confusing impression."

For Ibsen the dramatist, history at that time meant no more than we have seen reality to have meant for Ibsen the lyric poet. It was only the starting-point from which he set forth for the world of his own thoughts and fancies.

From the age of the Reformation Ibsen turned to the saga period. "But the royal sagas and the sterner traditions generally of that remote period did not attract me," he says in the preface to the second edition of "The Feast at Solhaug." "My poetic ends could not at that time be served by conflicts between kings and chieftains, between parties and mobs. That was to come later." But chance then brought to his hand N. M. Peter-

sen's "Historical Tales of the Icelanders at Home and Abroad," and the perusal of these excellent translations and paraphrases of some of the old Icelandic race-sagas had a marked influence over him. "In these race-chronicles," we read further in the preface just mentioned, "with their portrayal of the varying relations of man to man, of woman to woman, especially of human being to human being, there appealed to me a rich and personal vitality, and from my life with these individual men and women of the past, the first crude and dimly-outlined sketch of 'The Chieftains of Helgeland' shaped itself in my thought."

How far the details were thought out by him, he can no longer remember; but the two women were there who were afterwards to become Hjördis and Dagny. And there was also "a great feast, with stirring and pregnant strife."

"But here various considerations interfered. Most of them, at least those which were strongest and most decisive, were of a personal character, but I do not think it altogether insignificant that I busied myself just then with the study of Landstad's collection of 'Norwegian Popular Songs,' which had appeared a year or two before. My mood just then accorded better with the literary romanticism of the Middle Ages than with the hard facts of the sagas, better with the

verse form than with prose, and better with the element of melodious speech in the battle-song than with the language characteristic of the saga." With this confession to aid us, it is not difficult to imagine the mood in which the folk-song came between Ibsen and the saga, which transformed the viking Sigurd into the singer Gudmund, the faithful wife Dagny into the young and love-sick Signe, and the sketch of the tragedy of the "Chieftains" into the lyrical love-drama, "The Feast at Solhaug." Besides, we find among Ibsen's poems one or two which shed a light upon his feelings. That entitled "Field Flowers and Potted Plants" begins thus: —

"Your taste I cannot understand at all;
For Heaven's sake, where are your eyes?
Surely a beauty you will not call
Such a giddy thing, if you are wise,"

and ends with the following stanza: —

"Shrewd reason to me no comfort yields,
With its wearisome tale twice-told;
For she is a child of the air and the fields,
And sixteen bright summers old."

And the poem that comes next in the collection, "A Bird Song," suggests the mood that has found expression in the story of Signe's and Gudmund's love: —

"I painted poem-pictures
With play of colors bright,
While two brown eyes were watching,
All filled with laughing light."

It was doubtless under the influence of these lively brown eyes that "The Feast at Solhaug" came into being. So the piece has remained as the brightest and most cheerful among Ibsen's works; there are, indeed, dark and threatening storm-clouds on the horizon, but they disperse without having wrought any destruction; the dissonances have no serious result, and the play ends with a rich final harmony. It is not alone in its rhythmical aspect that "a light summer zephyr breathes" over the piece, to use Ibsen's own expression.

"The Feast at Solhaug" brought its author success. It was played before a crowded house and greeted with uproarious applause. "At the close of the performance, author and actors were called out several times. Later in the evening the orchestra, accompanied by a large portion of the audience, serenaded me at the window. I almost believe that I was carried away to the extent of making some sort of a speech to the crowd; at any rate, I know that I felt very happy" (Preface to the second edition). The piece received six performances during that season, a large number for Bergen, and was revived a number of times afterwards. For the first time it made Ibsen's name known in wider circles, for it was given not only in Christiania, but also in Copenhagen and Stockholm.

But if theatre and public received the piece favorably, the critics were not so well disposed. A score of years previously Henrik Hertz in his play "Svend Dyring's House," had used the metre of the Danish battle-songs, and now that Ibsen had made use of a similar metre, taken from the Norse popular songs, his work was at once characterized as an imitation of Hertz. When the piece was produced in Christiania, some of the critics of the press endeavored to point out similarities, and when the play became known in Denmark, things were naturally worse rather than better. It was "a study of 'Svend Dyring's House,' and far inferior to its model in every respect;" it was "neither more nor less than a colorless copy of Hertz's play;" it was "a bad Norwegian copy of a good Danish work," etc.

That these judgments are very superficial and misleading has been clearly and carefully shown by Vasenius in his graduating thesis. Vasenius analyzes both pieces, points out the great dramatic faults of Hertz's drama, and concludes that "The Feast at Solhaug" is a far better work, dramatically, than its assumed prototype, a conclusion to which any just dramaturgical objection can hardly be made. But he is not contented with this, and goes on to compare the motives and the characters of the two pieces, easily proving that

they have nothing to do with one another. Whoever looks closely into the matter must see that any attempt to explain "The Feast at Solhaug" as an imitation of "Svend Dyring's House" is only made possible by completely setting aside the leading motive and the principal characters of Ibsen's piece. With Hertz the principal motive is, as we know, Ridder Stig's disastrous use of the mysterious runes, and the pregnant consequences for Ragnhild. About this are grouped these secondary motives: 1. The wicked Guldborg's cruelty to her step-children, whose mother cannot rest in her grave because of the treatment they receive, but hovers about them in ghostly guise. 2. Ridder Stig's love for Regisse. 3. Tage Bolt's wooing of Ragnhild.

In Ibsen's piece there are no runes and there is no mysterious power that answers to them. There is nothing supernatural in Margit's love for Gudmund Alfsön; it arises and is developed in the most natural manner possible. Nor is there in Ibsen anything corresponding to the wicked step-mother and the ghost. On the other hand, there is a certain resemblance between Ridder Stig's and Gudmund Alfsön's position as between the two sisters. Both Stig and Gudmund are loved by both and disdain one of them, but this situation is too common in literature and not characteristic

enough to afford a basis for the charge of imitation. If the charge might be brought upon such grounds as these, the most absurd consequences would follow. Finally, there is a similarity between Tage Bolt's place in the construction of the Danish piece and Knud Gjæsling's place in the Norwegian. Both Tage and Knud woo one of the two sisters; the suit of both is lost, under very different circumstances, indeed, but on account of the respective love of the sisters for Ridder Stig and Gudmund Alfsön; both seek revenge in a nocturnal attack upon the place; and both are overpowered and bound. Let it be admitted that Hertz's play influenced Ibsen upon this point; such a correspondence of minor motive is surely not enough to make the piece neither more nor less than a copy, especially when there is so great a difference in the leading motive.

The leading motive in "The Feast at Solhaug" finds nothing whatever to correspond with it in "Svend Dyring's House." The leading motive is Margit's love for Gudmund, and I have already remarked that this love is not characterized by anything supernatural in its origin and development. Nor is its main characteristic to be found in the fact that it is scorned, so that in this respect also it is unlike Ragnhild's. Margit believes that Gudmund would prefer her if he were free; her

love is depicted as that of a married woman for a stranger. Upon this situation alone is the struggle of the play based, and every attempt to explain it upon the theory of its being an imitation of "Svend Dyring's House" must necessarily prove futile, and this especially since Ibsen, in the preface to the second edition, has explained the genesis of the piece in so interesting and satisfactory a manner.

But back of all this there is still the formal resemblance which comes from the use of the metrical form of the battle-song. It is not impossible that "Svend Dyring's House" may have impelled Ibsen to make use of that form, although this is denied by Ibsen in his preface to the second edition. How little he, at the time of its production, felt indebted to Hertz in this and in other respects is best seen from the fact that he produced "Svend Dyring's House" at the Bergen theatre less than two months after the first production of "The Feast at Solhaug." Ibsen's piece was played for the first time January 2, 1856, and that of Hertz followed February 24.

Ibsen's contention is, then, that his study of Landstad's "Folk-Songs" offers a sufficient explanation of the form given to his piece, and when we read his little essay, of the following year, "Upon the Battle-Song and its Poetic Signifi-

cance," and see how warm a welcome he gave the folk-song, and how great a part he thought it destined to play in poetic art, such an explanation as he offers seems wholly plausible. "The time will come," wrote Ibsen upon that occasion, "when the national poetry will turn to the folk-song as to an inexhaustible gold mine, and when the latter, refined, restored to its pristine purity, and exalted by art, will again take hold of the people." As a dramatic author he even preferred the folk-song to the saga. "The saga is wholly epic," he writes, "while the battle-song has the lyric element, — has it, although not as the drama has it, — and the dramatic poet who takes his material from the song, does not need to remodel his material as much as does the poet who takes it from the saga. This circumstance is advantageous to the poet, for it enables him to reproduce in his work a more exact and a more intimate picture of the age and the events with which he deals; by this means (if he be otherwise competent) he can present his hero to the public as the public already knows him from the folk-song. Furthermore, the commodious metre of the song allows of much freedom in its use, and this is of great importance in dramatic dialogue; so there can be no doubt that sooner or later this poetic quarry will be largely drawn

upon by the poet, who will erect his structure upon the foundation laid by Oehlenschläger. . . . National poetry in Norway began with the saga; the turn of the battle-song has now come."

It was, then, in the spirit and the style of the battle-song that "Olaf Liljekrans," Ibsen's next dramatic work, was written. It is more romantic in mood than "The Feast at Solhaug," although not to be compared with that work for strength and firmness of hand.

The action of this unprinted three-act drama may be outlined as follows:—

Fru Kirsten Liljekrans and her neighbor, Arne from Guldvik, have agreed to put an end to the feud long existing between their two families, and, to seal the reconciliation, Arne's daughter Ingeberg is to wed Fru Kirsten's son Olaf. Both Arne and Fru Kirsten are very much interested in having the wedding come off; the former, who is an ambitious peasant, desires to become connected with so distinguished a family as that of Liljekrans; the latter wishes to support the tottering family finances by means of the substantial possessions of the man of Guldvik. Just before the wedding, however, Olaf makes an excursion into the mountains, and there, in a mountain valley, meets a young girl, Alfild, who makes so marked an impression upon him that he forgets

his betrothed and everything else, and begs Alfild to return with him to the village and become his wife. Alfild is a child of nature; the mountain valley in which she has grown up in the society of her father, Thorgeir the fiddler, has not been populated since it was ravaged by the Black Death, and she has never been out of the valley. With naïve delight at thought of the novel sights awaiting her, she follows Olaf; but they have barely reached the village when Olaf remembers his earlier obligations, and his mother's pleas cause him to desert Alfild. Beside herself with grief and despair, the latter sets fire to the house, the scene of the wedding, and hastens back to her far-off valley, while at the same time the bride takes flight with Hemming, her father's workman, whom she prefers to Olaf. Alfild is pursued and seized by Fru Kirsten and her people; she is condemned to death upon the spot, and the sentence is to be at once executed, unless "some man of spotless fame shall step forward, declare her innocent, and proclaim himself willing to marry her then and there." At the last moment Olaf Liljekrans appears, and, repenting of his former weakness, declares that he will save and wed her, to which resolution Fru Kirsten finally gives her consent, upon learning that the rich, uninhabited valley belongs to Alfild. At the

end, Ingeberg and Hemming also receive Arne's forgiveness and blessing.

As we know, there is a folk-song bearing the title of Ibsen's piece. It may be found in Landstad's "Norwegian Folk-Songs." The Olaf Liljekrans of the song is betrothed as in the play, and the wedding is soon to be held. Then he meets the elves, who seek to bewitch him, but he resists their enchantments, and does not allow himself to be frightened at their threats. For this they punish him with such blows that he dies shortly after returning home. One or two passages in the piece refer to this song, and a little of the dialogue is borrowed from its verse. Probably the idea of Fru Kirsten was taken from the folk-song in which Olaf's mother plays a part similar to that played by Fru Kirsten in the beginning of the piece; and Olaf's bereft and perplexed condition, as represented in the first act, may be considered a feature which we owe to the influence of the folk-song. But there is no further resemblance between the song and the drama. Beyond this they have nothing in common either in action or in character.

Neither was the folk-song the germ of the piece. This has already developed root and stem before the influence of the folk-song makes itself felt, and so any such influence has little to do with the development of the action. What it does chiefly is

to give the play a figure and a name. This figure is not, however, the principal character; Alfild must be considered as occupying that position, and it may be shown that hers is the oldest figure in the piece.

This young girl, living in a mountain valley, the inhabitants of which died when "the great plague swept over the villages," is found, when looked at more closely, to be no other than the "Justedalrypa" of the legend. This legend, as given by A. Faye, first gave Ibsen the idea of his drama. The very year when he wrote "Catilina" he was planning to deal dramatically with the story of "Justedalrypa," and he even set to work. The work was put aside, however, after the first two acts had been written, but the manuscript of 1850 still exists, and bears the title, "The Grouse¹ of Justedal: a National Play in Four Acts." The title-figure is that of Alfild in "Olaf Liljekrans," and she even bears that name, while the action seems to have been planned much as it was worked out in the later and completed drama.

"Olaf Liljekrans" brings to an end the period of Ibsen's apprenticeship in Bergen; it was the last of the pieces written by him for the Bergen theatre during his management. It marks the close, as "St. John's Night" marks the beginning;

¹ "Rype" means grouse or ptarmigan.—TR.

and the two pieces have a certain similarity to one another. They are both somewhat tentative, vague, and inconsequent, and the reason is that they stand at the boundaries of a peculiar period of Ibsen's development. In "St. John's Night" the romanticism of the folk-song begins to exert an influence: in "Olaf Liljekrans" this influence is about to disappear. Just as "St. John's Night" was preceded by a definition of national poetry, so "Olaf Liljekrans" is followed by an æsthetic discussion. This is the already mentioned essay, "Upon the Battle-Song and its Poetic Significance." The passage quoted shows how great an importance was attached by Ibsen to the influence of the folk-song; but his practice did not fully carry out his theory. In "Olaf Liljekrans," as we have already said, the romantic influence of the folk-song has almost disappeared.

Formally considered, the dissolution of this influence may be seen at the first glance. Verse and prose struggle with one another for precedence, and in this case, unlike "The Feast at Solhaug," it is not only the lyrical portion which is written in verse; but commonplace minor scenes are given in metrical form, while romantic love-scenes between the leading characters appear in prose garb.

The lack of definiteness on the part of the

psychological development is, if possible, even more marked. A striking change of mood is characteristic both of Olaf and Alfhild. At one moment they are romantically inclined, at the next they speak in a wholly natural and practical manner. Upon the mountain in the first act Olaf speaks and thinks in such a manner that we can easily believe Alfhild to be a genuine elf-woman who has bewitched him, and not an ordinary mortal with whom he has fallen in love; but hardly has he returned to the village when the romantic mood leaves him, and he is bent by the every-day considerations which the mother urges. It is thus also with Alfhild. After she has set fire to the bridal house, her mood is at high romantic pressure, she speaks "with a marked and growing accent of bewilderment," according to the direction given in the manuscript; but when she is seized and brought before Fru Kirsten for judgment, she is quiet, self-possessed, and natural. Transitions like this, abrupt and unmotivated, occur frequently. Romanticism no longer furnishes the main spring of action; it appears rather in a series of outward effects.

And finally, when we consider the idea of the piece, we become again sensible of the dissolution of the romantic influence. For this idea is that of the conflict between the romantic and the real.

These two conflicting views of life appear in Olaf in direct contrast. Under Alfild's influence he sees everything with romantic eyes; but under his mother's influence things appear to him as they really are. Alfild is cast in a wholly different mould, and the contradiction that exists in Olaf's character, exists for her only as a form of external resistance. She represents the romantic at strife with brutal reality, and her defeat in this struggle is like any other triumph of the real. But Ibsen's sympathy is still upon the romantic side and it is with bitter despondency that he allows romanticism to draw the shorter straw.

"Olaf Liljekrans" had but two performances. Ibsen himself was not pleased with his piece and never had it printed. Two years after its production he sought to transform it into a romantic opera. The first act was completed and put aside for a couple of years; then he took it up again, began the second act, and sent a copy of the first to the composer Udbye, who had expressed a willingness to write the music; but hardly had he taken this step, when the whole plan was given up.¹

¹ The original manuscript, dated 1859, belongs to a gentleman in Christiania. The copy sent to Udbye belongs to the Scientific Society of Thronhjelm, together with Ibsen's letter to Udbye, dated July 18, 1861, and the latter's account of the subsequent dealings between poet and composer.

The simple fact is that when "Olaf Liljekrans" was written Ibsen's development had reached a point from which there was no way leading back to romanticism. Everything pointed onward to new fields and new horizons. One period of his development was closed, and a new one was to begin. The folk-song had nothing further to offer him; it was now the turn of the saga.

And at this time also the five years were over for which he was pledged to the Bergen theatre as director. Dramaturgically considered, they had been fruitful years for him, and they had been made significant for his development by the ferment of romanticism. But the process of fermentation was now over, with the period of his apprenticeship; he had mastered his art; he had attained, provisionally at least, to clearness and rest.

But the clearness and rest were not to last long, and new struggles, new doubts, were awaiting him under changed conditions.

A new position — that of director of the Norwegian theatre at Christiania — was ready to receive him, and the city that had witnessed his early struggle for existence, was, during the seven years following, to witness the struggle of his manhood for a secure position among poets.

In the summer of 1857 he left Bergen, returning thither the next year for a brief visit and to wed

his betrothed, the one to whom, after many years of companionship for better for worse, he was to dedicate so charming an expression of his "Thanks" as the following: —

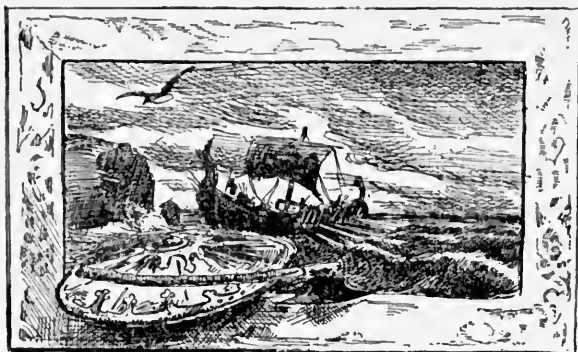
" Her cares were the shadows
That darkened my road, —
Her joys were the angels
My pathway that showed.

" Her home is out yonder,
And freedom its light,
By the sea where the poet
Sees imaged his flight.

" Of her race are the figures
Marching along,
With banners all waving,
Seen in my song.

" It was she that kindled
My soul to glow ;
And all that I owe her
None other may know.

" And although she awaited
No thanks for pay,
I have sung and printed
This grateful lay "



III.

LIFE IN CHRISTIANIA.

WHEN Ibsen came to Christiania for the second time he brought with him the beginning of a new dramatic work. The impressions and the images that had been left with him from his perusal of the Icelandic race-sagas had continued to occupy his mind, and had, while he was still in Bergen, assumed a definite dramatic and psychological form.

One thing only was not quite clear to him at first, and this was the style in which the saga-drama should be written. In the essay "Upon the Battle-Song and its Poetic Significance" he is much busied with this problem.

Of one thing he was certain, that the form chosen by Oehlenschläger could not be utilized. "It will certainly come to be recognized," he wrote, "that the iambic pentameter is by no means the most appropriate form for the treatment of subjects from the Scandinavian past; this form of verse is entirely foreign to our national metres, and it is only by means of a national form that full justice may be done the national material."

But Oehlenschläger had attempted another form as well, — that of Greek tragedy. Might not this be the most suitable? In another passage of the essay we read: "Although the saga records fall within the Christian period of the North, yet their poetry is essentially pagan, and so their material may be more suitably handled in the old Greek manner than in that which is known as the modern Christian manner. For this reason Oehlenschläger's 'Baldur the Good' was more successful than any other of his dramatic works."

According to Botten-Hansen's biography, Ibsen began to write "The Chieftains" in verse, and from what we have just read, he must have contemplated carrying out the work in the Greek style. A Norse tragedy of fate in the Greek style, — such was probably the task as it first shaped itself for him.

But he had not gone very far before new doubts

arose. He had already perceived, when he wrote the essay on the battle-song, that still another form was available for a work of this sort. "A *prose* 'Haakon Jarl' from Oehlenschläger's pen might be quite as poetic as one in verse," he had written; and that by "prose" he meant the style of the sagas themselves may hardly be doubted.

The year before, Björnson had written "Between the Battles," which had not yet, however, been either printed or performed. In that little work the attempt was made, for the first time, to employ the saga style in dramatic poetry, but Björnson was too young and too lyrically inclined to be successful in conforming to the strict requirements of that style. So it was really Ibsen who first brought it into dramatic use, while Björnson at the same time, in "Synnöve Solbakken," again brought it into employment for narrative purposes. So these two poets found themselves on common ground for the first time, — each, independently of the other, turning to the pithy and laconic modes of expression of the old Norsemen in search of a form for the embodiment of his ideas.

The manner in which Ibsen solved the problem has justly been admired both by contemporary and later critics. Here is nothing superfluous and nothing unessential; no monologue, and no lyric outburst; the dialogue glows

with passion, but the glow never becomes flame or gives out sparks; here is caustic wit and biting repartee, but the fighting is not carried on with light rapiers; we seem to be watching a battle for life and death with the short, heavy swords which the old vikings used,—hatred and love, friendship and vengeance, scorn and grief,—all are as intense as in the sagas themselves; their style could not find a better match, and, as we read, we think involuntarily of Henrik Wergeland's words about the speech of the Norwegian mountaineer:—

“As within the forest ringing,
Deep the shining axe strikes home.”

And it is not only the saga style, it is the soul as well that speaks to us in this greatly planned work.

One critic after another has reproached the author for degrading the demigods of the “*Völsunga Saga*” by making them mere Norwegian and Icelandic vikings of the age of Erik Blodöx, and for culling from other sagas effective scenes for his piece. The only one who, as far as I know, has protested against these assertions is Vasenius, who maintains that Ibsen did quite right in making vikings out of the heroes of the “*Völsunga Saga*,” and that he has borrowed nothing whatever from other sagas. He who

will take the trouble, however, to look through the sagas of which there may be question, will perceive that neither view accurately states the relation of the piece to its sources.

"The Chieftains of Helgeland" does not stand in as intimate a relation to the "*Völsunga Saga*" as the critic has assumed. A portion of the story and something of the scheme of action of the play have been taken from that saga, but only the general outlines of the saga have been reproduced, — not its incidents, and even less its characters.

Sigurd Viking, like Sigurd Fafnersbane, has done the deed demanded by Hjördis (Brynhild) of the man who shall marry her, and has afterward, like his heroic namesake, renounced her in the interest of his foster-brother Gunnar, taking himself another woman for wife. The latter, in a conversation with Hjördis (Brynhild), explains the situation, and Hjördis in consequence brings about Sigurd's death and her own. As we see, all this must be expressed in very general terms, if it is to apply to both saga and drama.

Is there any other resemblance? Yes, there is one more. After Gudrun has revealed the secret there follows a scene in which she endeavors to quiet Brynhild, bidding her think no more about it; then there is a scene in which

Sigurd explains the situation to Brynhild; and, finally, there is a scene in which Brynhild urges Gunnar to slay Sigurd. All three of these scenes have analogues in the third act of "The Chieftains" but they stand in a different order, and nothing of their contents has been transferred to the drama.

It is thus indisputable that a connection exists between "The Chieftains" and the "Völsunga Saga," but the relation is as free as that of "Fru Inger of Oestraat" to the facts of history. "The Chieftains" cannot possibly be called a dramatization of the corresponding portions of the "Völsunga Saga;" the piece cannot even be accurately described as a free dramatic paraphrase. If we are to be exact, we may call it a dramatic work which utilizes, after a considerable alteration, certain of the leading features of the saga.

The relation of the piece to other sagas may be similarly characterized. The circumstances under which Oernulf is slain find their prototypes in "Egil's Saga." Egil's famous chant of mourning for his son is utilized in a quite similar manner. Egil, grieving for the loss of his son, refuses to take any food. His daughter Thorgerde then says: "Now, father, would I wish that we might live long enough for thee

to make a chant for Bödvar, and for me to engrave it, and thereafter we may die if it seem best. For it will be long ere thy son Thorsten make a chant for his brother; it is not fitting that there be no funeral feast made for him, yet how may there be such, if none of us appear?" Egil replies that he may now hardly sing, even if he make endeavor; "but attempt it I will," he says. And when the chant is over, we read in the saga: "As Egil went on with the chant, his strength waxed, and when it was finished he sang it for Asgerde, Thorgerde, and the rest of his people. Then he arose and took the high seat." Here Ibsen has really dramatized the saga. And other details, although not quite so accurately reproduced, may be found in the sagas, which Ibsen learned to know through Petersen's translations. The magnificently conceived invitation to the feast in the second act has many analogies in the sagas. Oernulf's question concerning the death of Thorolf, and the observation made by him in that connection, are suggested by Kveldulf's words upon the death of his son Thorolf; what Hjördis says of the bow-string is taken from Halgerde's famous saying upon the occasion of Gunnar of Hlidarende's last fight; while finally, in the tragic story told of the love of Kjartan and Gudrun in the "*Laxdæla Saga*,"

we have a narrative presenting many analogies to the fate of Sigurd and Hjördis.

All these things may be called trifles, but they do not permit us to say that the charge of borrowing important details from various sagas for the adornment of Ibsen's dramatization of the "*Völsunga Saga*" has been disproved. Let us look at what is of most importance, at the characters themselves. Can it be truthfully said of them that they are the "*Völsunga Saga*" heroes spoiled by Ibsen?

What has Sigurd Viking in common with Sigurd Fafnersbane? Name, courage, doughtiness in battle. The name, which has misled more than one critic, was chosen by Ibsen as a common viking name, and courage and doughtiness were as common among the vikings of the time of Erik Blodöx as among the semi-mythical characters of the "*Völsunga Saga*." If Ibsen's intention was to depict Sigurd Fafnersbane, he must have been indeed a bungler not to do it better. But his object was a very different one; it was the creation of a typical viking figure of the close of the viking period, of the period nearest to the introduction of Christianity; and this task was successfully accomplished by him. And what point of contact is there between the characters of Gunnar Herse and Gunnar Gjukkessön?

The one is as gentle and peacefully disposed as the other is fierce and eager for combat. Finally, if we are to look for a distinct prototype of each figure, we should look to "Njal's Saga" rather than to the "Völsunga Saga." When Gunnar of Hlidarende has overthrown his opponent at Rangaa, he says, "I know not whether I should be reckoned the less brave than others in that the slaying of men is the less to my taste." These words indicate the mainspring of Gunnar Herse's character. And in the same saga one might perhaps find more of the character of Hjördis than in the "Völsunga Saga." Hjördis has, just like Brynhild, a true Valkyrie nature, but she has much more in common with the wicked women of the race-sagas. Her opposition to Kaare the peasant, her biting and malicious words at the feast, her sternness and vengefulness bring her into far closer kinship with Gunnar of Hlidarende's wife Halgerde, — with the difference, however, that Ibsen has endeavored to motivate and to make humanly natural that which in "Njal's Saga" is unprovoked and unnatural malevolence. Probably no one will assert that Dagny resembles the Gudrun of the "Völsunga Saga." In spite of Ibsen's own words in the preface to "The Feast at Solhaug," concerning the two female types which reading of the sagas revealed to him,

Dagny is not directly related to anything in the saga literature, unless Kjartan's wife, Hrefna, in the "*Laxdæla Saga*," be taken as having afforded a bare suggestion for Ibsen's creation. Last of all we have Oernulf, who is typical of the elder, barbaric, and less civilized race of the vikings. Egil Skallagrimson in his old age, and several other saga figures, doubtless sat as models for him. With his venerable strength, his hardiness, his insistence upon his rights, and his love for gold and possessions, he is a typical figure of the viking period.

I think I have now shown that any attempt to explain "*The Chieftains*" as a dramatic paraphrase of the "*Völsunga Saga*," based upon a comparison between play and saga, must prove abortive. It would satisfactorily characterize the work to say that Ibsen gathered his impressions from reading a whole series of sagas, and that he worked them freely into an organic whole, which is a remarkable reproduction of the spirit of the race-sagas, but which rarely makes literal use of them.

In these race-sagas, with their wild scenes and passions, he found just what he needed for the "human investiture of the moods, the images, and the thoughts then occupying his mind, or more or less distinctly hovering about it." The

poet whose first work foreshadowed the great tragic "contradiction between craving and gift, between will and possibility," must have found a singular attraction in such firmly moulded and distinct personalities as are represented by Oernulf and Sigurd. And the poet whose early activity had produced a sketch like that of Furia, must have recognized his own fancies in the wild and passionate women in whose likeness Hjördis was chiselled. The first effort of his youth is firmly linked with the first work of his ripened manhood.

"The Chieftains of Helgeland" was as epoch-making a work in Norwegian dramatic poetry as was "Synnöve Solbakken" in narrative literature. It made a closer approach to Norse antiquity than any previous work had succeeded in making. From Evald's "Balder's Death" to Oehlenschläger's "Haakon Jarl" a great step was taken in the direction of a just conception and presentation of the old Norseman, but the step from Oehlenschläger to Ibsen was still greater. No wonder that to the generation which viewed ancient Norway with Oehlenschläger's eyes the piece seemed crude, and the effort to bring a dramatic work into so close a relation with the sagas seemed mistaken. "The rude and savage life which they depict," wrote J. L. Heiberg, in his censure of Ibsen's work, "is tempered, in the original form, by its epic

presentation, but from the moment when this life is dramatized, nothing is left but the material itself in all its crudity." The author has used this material "in so objective a manner, that it is made for us a stumbling-block, since everything that is harsh in the epic becomes yet harsher in the drama." "A Norwegian stage will hardly be created in the laboratory where these experiments are performed." In consequence of this censure, the play was rejected by the royal theatre of Copenhagen, and fared no better in Christiania. The battle for a national theatre was being hotly waged in the capital. The Christiania theatre was still Danish; its *personnel* was almost exclusively Danish, and a Dane (Borgaard) had its artistic management. A large portion of the public, especially of the older generation, found this entirely proper, and so the Danish artists were admired, and every attempt to create a Norwegian dramatic art was looked upon with suspicion and scorn.

Opposed to this theatre and its following were all those who contended that Norway's stage must be Norwegian, if it were to do its proper work in the cultivation of the people. A few of these men had, in 1852, established a sort of dramatic school for the purpose of educating Norwegian actors. The school soon became a theatre, — "The Norwegian Theatre," — and between the two theatres

there was about a decade of hot rivalry, both press and public taking sides. As director of the Norwegian theatre, Ibsen occupied an outpost in this struggle, and cast himself heart and soul into the fray.

The year before Ibsen's return to Christiania there had been a great battle about the nationality of the theatre. Björnson and all the national party demanded that henceforth the Christiania theatre should not be recruited from Denmark. This demand not being complied with, a hissing concert was organized for the reception of a new Danish actor, and this demonstration resulted in the engagement of a number of Norwegian actors; but the Danish director continued to treat Norwegian matters in a very stepmotherly fashion, and he was especially reproached for his neglect of Norwegian literature. After the hissing concert there had been a cessation of hostilities, which lasted until Henrik Ibsen offered "The Chieftains" to the Christiania theatre in 1857, his own theatre not being well enough equipped to produce it. At first, Borgaard said that it should be produced in the course of the season, but after half a year had passed the author was informed that "the financial condition of the theatre did not permit the payment of an *honorarium* for original works." Since, but a short time before, the financial condi-



HENRIK IBSEN.

(At the close of the fifties

tion of the theatre had permitted a considerable augmentation of the salaries of a number of the Danish actors, and since nothing was said in the notification of a production the following season, this conduct was held by many to be a declaration of war upon the national dramatic literature. So Ibsen published in "*Aftenbladet*" a hot attack upon the management of the theatre. This led to a violent controversy, in which Ibsen was abused in the roughest manner by the other party, while Björnson and Botten-Hansen took his part. Nothing was then left him but to publish "*The Chieftains*" in book form, and at the same time to produce it at the Norwegian theatre. It was not until 1861 that it was added to the repertoire of the Christiania theatre, of which it has since been one of the ornaments.

How deeply Ibsen at that time felt himself in sympathy with the national movement appears most clearly from the fact that he conceived the idea of an association for the purpose of resisting foreign influence and asserting the national principle in art. Just think of Henrik Ibsen as the founder of an association!

The idea was canvassed in the office of "*Aftenbladet*" by Ibsen and two of the editors of that sheet, Richter, now (1888) minister of state, and Björnson. As a result, Björnson and Ibsen issued

invitations to join in such an association. It was organized Nov. 22, 1859, under the name of "The Norwegian Society." Björnson was made president, and Ibsen vice-president. Opposition to the Düsseldorf school of painting was one of the principles of the society, which was a little unfortunate, because it prevented a number of people from joining. The only thing meant by this was an expression of opposition to the excess of foreign influence in the domain of plastic art. The principal aim of the society was to combat Danish dramatic art in Norway, and, largely in consequence of its activity, Wilhelm Wiehe, the chief Danish actor in Christiania, withdrew from the Norwegian stage shortly after. This led to doleful lamentations in prose and verse in the public press on the part of the Danish-minded. A. Munch shrieked: —

"What? Is it possible the hour's cry,
Empty of all but savage Berserk rage,
Has driven such an actor from the stage?
Surely, the public sympathy is his,
And every thought that sane and worthy is!"

And H. O. Blom, in a rhymed epistle to Wiehe, suggested that the Day of Judgment was at hand for the theatre; all of which impelled Ibsen to take the field with his bold and witty "Open Letter to the Poet H. O. Blom." After a few years the national party came out victorious; most of the Danish actors withdrew, Borgaard was dismissed,

and the Norwegian theatre became united with the Christiania theatre.

Otherwise "The Norwegian Society" did not play any important part. In 1860 it appointed a committee, with Ibsen as one of the members, for the purpose of bringing together the best artists from Bergen and the two theatres of the capital in a series of Norwegian festival performances in Christiania; but the direction of the Christiania theatre having declined to give its stage for this purpose, the plan came to nothing, and "The Norwegian Society" missed the honor of carrying it through. Later many members of the *Storting* joined the association, which resulted in its transformation into a sort of political society; Ibsen then gradually withdrew, and the society soon collapsed.

In another circle, less pronounced in its oppositional tendencies, he continued to move. This was a little gathering of men engaged or interested in literary pursuits, which Botten-Hansen collected about him. They met at times in Botten-Hansen's book-lined rooms, at times in a little Swiss café, known as *L'Orsa's Café*, where a small and modest room was appropriated by the gathering. Although the time was fruitful in political controversy, men of the most diverse views met thus together, attracted by Botten-Hansen's philanthropic and lovable person-

ality. A. O. Vinje, Ernst Sars, Christian Friele, L. L. Daae, and others, thus met peaceably upon neutral ground. Asbjørnsen's humor made at times a pleasant diversion in the serious literary conversations, and even Welhaven put in an appearance now and then. When he and Vinje began upon one of their audacious and witty word-tournaments, there was life and laughter enough in the camp. Ibsen was one of the most frequent visitors to these gatherings, and a large share of the time left him from his theatrical labors was spent at Botten-Hansen's or in the little back room of L'Orsa's Café.

These years were not rich in literary production, but he wrote a series of poems, among which "Terje Vigen" and "On the Mountain Plains," both dated 1860, are the most important. The latter of these poems shows distinctly enough in what a state of commotion he was, and that something new was seeking for expression in his poetry, without his quite knowing what it was or what it signified.

It goes almost without saying that he was at this time planning to break new paths for the drama. In the summer of 1858 he had already begun to make studies for "The Pretenders," but the plan of this work was for a time set aside, and another gradually absorbed his attention. Not from an-

cient times, but from his own, would he take his material; it was not a historical tragedy, but a modern comedy, that he would write. The satirist was growing in him, and "Love's Comedy" shaped itself at the expense of the newly planned historical tragedy.

But formal difficulties stood in the way of the execution of this plan. A modern comedy must obviously be written in prose, and its characters must speak in the manner of cultivated men and women of the period. The scheme was outlined and the work begun, but the further he progressed with it, the less he was satisfied. He had so long held intercourse with the style of the saga and with the expressions and phrases of the romantic Middle Ages that it was, in the beginning, neither easy nor natural for him to write in the ordinary language of conversation. It seemed stiffer than it ought to be, and he came to feel that his dialogue was not sufficiently impressive. So prose was abandoned, and the piece translated — sometimes line for line, and at others with greater freedom — into the familiar rhymed iambics which have been so justly admired for their wit and liveliness. "The Young Men's Union" was the first play in which Ibsen successfully imparted these characteristic to dialogue in modern prose.

The scene of "Love's Comedy" is laid, as is

well known, in a villa at Drammensvejen, and the characters are every-day men, women, students, clerks, and merchants. The author had even the unparalleled audacity to introduce the clergy upon the stage, and to ridicule it in the person of Pastor Straamand. As a piece of contemporary satire it is a courageous work, fresh in its humor and bold in its outcome.

"There is something in the inspiration of 'Love's Comedy' that takes us back to Fru Collett's 'The Magistrate's Daughters,'" observes Georg Brandes, in his well-known characterization of Henrik Ibsen; that book "waged quite as wittily, although less formally, the warfare against betrothal and marriage which is carried on in Ibsen's book with a firm and virile hand." These two works have undeniably in common the attack upon betrothal and marriage, but the standpoint from which the attack is made is very different.

It is the *mariage de convenance* that is attacked in Fru Collett's novel. No marriage can result in happiness unless based on mutual affection, and in such a matter the feeling of the woman must count for much more than in other matters. These two theses may be regarded as the poles about which the book revolves.

Ibsen, on the contrary, does not attack the *mariage de convenance*; he even makes one of



HENRIK IBSEN.

(At the beginning of the sixties.)

the most sympathetic characters in the play, the merchant Guldstad, speak vigorously in its defence, and the importance which Ibsen himself attaches to this defence appears in its influence upon the outcome of the action. For it is Guldstad's defence of the rational marriage, as opposed to the marriage of inclination, that brings about the separation of Falk and Svanhild.

The very thing against which the satire of the piece is directed from beginning to end is the sort of union entered into through affection. The real theme of the play is the manner in which love is quenched by such unions. From the moment that love becomes official its doom is sealed. First of all come the aunts and female friends and "slay love's poesy" by their officious interest in the betrothed pair; then follows marriage with its struggle for subsistence and its imbecile baby-talk. That which began as a festival ends by becoming merely trivial, and most men, so far from being elevated by thus living in common with their wives, fall into a dull and soulless life of routine.

"Profit by your experience, look around,
See how each pair of lovers act and speak
As if their wealth were wholly without bound.
First reckless to the altar rush this pair;
Then to their new and happy home return,
And for a time their life seems bright and fair.
Now comes the day of reckoning, and there!
Behold how bankrupt is the whole concern!

Bankrupt the bloom of youth upon her face,
Bankrupt the flower of thought within her soul,
Bankrupt the glow that promised life to grace,
His courage bankrupt now beyond control.
Bankruptcy over the whole household hovers ;
And yet this pair set bravely out together,
And seemed to be a first-class firm of lovers ! ”

Thus it was with Straamand and his Maren, with Styver and Frøken Skjære, and thus it is with Lind and Anna. These are the “ matches of inclination,” and they all end in triviality because love is not strong enough to endure.

“ The flame is spent ! barely the smoke remains !
Sic transit gloria amoris, maiden ! ”

It is with love as with religion ; as it becomes official it loses in force. The men of our age are too insignificant to be capable of loving, and yet they go about and fancy that they are capable, and this is the tragi-comedy of the situation.

“ See Lind and Styver, the parson and his wife
As love’s Yule-goats ¹ they masquerade about,
Faith on their lips and falsehood in their soul,
Yet thought quite worthy people on the whole !
With lies to one another they ’re replying,
Yet no one dare reproach them for their lying.”

Falk and Svanhild present a contrast to this apathetic feeling, which both recognize and de-

¹ “ Julebukke ” here translated “ Yule-goats ” refers to the Norwegian custom of masquerading at Christmas time disguised with the horns and skins of goats and other animals. — TR.

plore, but they are too wholly children of their age to feel sure that their love will overcome the triviality of life. They feel, as Svanhild puts it, that

“ From this day
Our festal march must take the downward way;
And when the day of reckoning is at hand,
And we before the Mighty Judge shall stand,
Then will he ask of us, the Righteous One,
What with the treasure lent us we have done.
And in our answer, Falk, what grace to save :
‘ We lost it on our journey to the grave.’ ”

No, if their love is to endure, and to preserve its elevating power, it must be transformed into a memory; it must be freed from the outward forms of daily life and converted into an inner and purely spiritual possession. So Falk and Svanhild come to the conclusion that Ibsen had expressed more than ten years previously in his youthful poems, and Falk, like Ibsen, asserts the ennobling influence of the memory of a past love, when he says : —

“ E’en as the grave leads to a better light,
So love to life may consecrated be
Only when, freed from passion, it takes flight
Into the spirit-realm of memory.”

In full accord with his characteristic view the author makes his principal characters part just when they have found one another. The catastrophe of the piece, which will always seem pain-

ful in the ordinary view, was for Ibsen its one adornment and poetical solution.

The originality of "Love's Comedy" rests then upon the author's peculiar and ideally impressed nature. In the name of the ideal he weighed and found love wanting in the imperfect form in which it appears in actual life. He scourged love in the name of love itself; and, although he was not blind to the beauty of home and family life, — this appears clearly enough from the words of Straamand and Styver in the third act, — his logical mind could admit no compromise. He inexorably maintained that one thing or the other must be chosen. He was so used to contemplation of the pure light of the ideal that he could not be satisfied with the broken rays of the real.

"Love's Comedy" was completed in the summer of 1862, and appeared the following winter as a New Year's gift to the readers of the "Illustrated News."

The next year a new work of Ibsen was ready; it was the for some time contemplated "Pretenders." When, in the summer of 1863, he began upon this work, he was hampered by no uncertainty or hesitation. The work was written at a spurt, and so easily did the material take shape that six weeks sufficed for its completion. This statement, made by a previous biographer, seems

almost incredible; but Ibsen has given the author of the present work a confirmation of the fact.

The construction of "The Pretenders" is not a little unlike that of its immediate predecessors. In those the action was confined within the briefest possible period, and there were few changes of scene; unity of place was almost entirely respected. In "The Pretenders," on the contrary, Ibsen has been less rigorous in these respects; several years elapse between the beginning and the end of the piece, and there are numerous changes of scene, — two to an act, upon the average.

But if he have taken greater technical liberties than before, he has, on the other hand, confined himself more closely to the historical record. We find in the history of the period treated the most important of the events described; and the main traits of character of the leading figures are also recognizable, although Ibsen has genially deepened the given facts.

Ernst Sars, in drawing the distinction between the followers of Haakon and of Skule, makes use of expressions which may, with slight modifications, be applied to the two parties in the play. He says: "We meet everywhere in this story the same strength and certainty on the one side,

and the same palsy and lack of confidence on the other. The old Birkebejner appear to us frank and straightforward, like men having an unfaltering conviction of the justice of their cause, and an inextinguishable confidence in its final victory. Skule's followers, on the other hand, are given to intrigue and chicanery, seeking to set all sorts of hindrances in the way of their enthusiastic opponents. They do not come squarely out with their aims; and their aims are so at variance with actual conditions that their appearance is characterized by vagueness and irresolution."

The reason for this contrast appears clearly in history. Haakon represented the carrying out of Sverre's kingly plans; he had been reared in the unfaltering conviction of his right to rule over the country; he grew to manhood among the veterans of Sverre's age, who were imbued with his principles, and from whom he accepted those principles as a complete system, and for him the main question of the age was how to put them into effect. His standpoint was definite and uncomplicated from the first, and it influenced his whole personality. What above all else made him strong was the tranquil and equable disposition by which he was distinguished, and which had its root in the unfailing belief that justice and the popular voice were with him.

With Skule it was wholly otherwise. He represented the aristocratic and hierarchial principle at strife with the new kingdom; but this battle had really been fought out, and the royal power established, so that Skule's effort to renew the strife was but a last convulsive struggle of the already defeated cause. Finally, the aristocrats whom Skule represented formed a party with him, but it had already suffered many defeats, and can have been neither numerous nor confident. This appeared distinctly when Skule made open rebellion against Haakon. "In spite of the good fortune which seemed to attend him at the start, it was clear enough at the outset that this attempt to renew warfare upon the Norwegian throne was the act of a desperate gamester, who does not count the chances, but rushes blindly in, hoping that luck will favor him." The higher clergy were no longer united; and those whom he might count his friends did not dare to join with him; he had supporters among the aristocracy, but the time was past in which an aristocratic party like that of Erling Skakke could be formed. He could not even build upon the old enmity of the North and the South; formerly this had been a "rich wellspring of civil warfare," but now "it seems to have been nearly dried up." Thus "Skule's attempt had no support either from public sentiment or the ruling interests

of the land, and a single defeat sufficed to overthrow him."

As we see, there is a close correspondence between the historical relation of Haakon and Skule as depicted by poet and historian.

Psychologically, Ibsen has given the two opposed leaders a profounder significance than they appear to have had in history.

Haakon does not seem to have been a genially disposed character, and when Ibsen nevertheless represents him as such, and bestows upon him kingly thoughts, it is doubtless because he felt peculiarly attracted by his personality.

If we except "St. John's Night," "The Feast at Solhaug," and "Olaf Liljekrans," the calling of his chief characters plays an important part in all the plays which Ibsen at this time had written. Catiline's call was to save Rome, Fru Inger's to save Norway; Hjördis felt called to be an Amazon, Falk to be a poet. One's calling appeared to Ibsen in a mystic, poetical light, and so a figure like that of Haakon, whose belief in his right and whose confidence in his endowment were so marked, stood for him in a peculiarly poetic gleam. Ernst Sars is of the opinion that Haakon "is not to be compared for power or poetic splendor with the more conspicuous of his predecessors." Ibsen holds the contrary opinion;

Haakon's greatness is found in the harmony existing between the task he has set himself and the situation in which he is placed. It is found in the unfathomable, the mystical, his great and secret calling, his league with "the mighty above," that prepares the way for the chosen, and permits him to march forward to his aim as surely and almost as unconsciously as the somnambulist.

But contrasted with this mysterious and Aladdin-like certainty stands the man of doubt and deliberation; he who is never sure of himself; he who dare not choose the one because he may never lose sight of the other that might also be chosen; he who is God's step-child upon earth, because he is without that inspiration from above which Bishop Nikolas calls *ingenium*. He is richly equipped; he is noble and high-minded; nothing is lacking him save the one thing in which the greatness of the other consists, for in place of this he has the gnawing gift of doubt. In depicting this personality, Ibsen attained to greater heights and depths than ever before, and more than this, the character is one of the most deeply felt and skilfully drawn in the entire Ibsen gallery.

Georg Brandes has adduced, with much acuteness, a little exchange of speech between Skule and Jatgeir the Skald, for the purpose of illustrating Ibsen's relation to his hero.

KING SKULE.

To be a king what gift is needful for me?

JATGEIR.

Not that of doubt; thou wouldst not question thus.

KING SKULE.

What gift is needful?

JATGEIR.

Lord, thou art a king.

KING SKULE.

Art then at all times sure thou art a poet?

This last reply might serve as a motto for the whole piece. "How much is told in this reply," Brandes remarks. "How the relation is reversed, and the thing transformed into the picture of that which should itself be the picture of the thing! How painful a confession in that last line: 'Art then at all times sure thou art a poet?'"

Nothing is more certain than that, when Ibsen became the poet of doubt in "The Pretenders," it was because he had himself felt the worm gnawing at his heart. In the earliest of his youthful poems doubt found words, and we have discerned it later, lurking behind the deliberations that preceded the composition of certain of his works. To what an extent he was tortured by doubts of his own poetic gift appears further from a cycle of poems, published in "The Illustrated

News" of 1859, under the title "In the Picture Gallery." The editor says in a note that these poems date from "an earlier period of his life and development;" they are probably to be referred to the close of his stay at Bergen. This cycle is based upon an impression derived from the Dresden gallery, and the sight of a woman who was sitting and copying Murillo's Madonna. It is the impression which later gave rise to the little poem "In the Gallery," which has found a place in his collected poems. He has placed on her lips a series of poems in which she bewails her vanished dreams of art, and upon this collection the poet has placed a crown of sonnets, which give utterance in his own name to the same plaint.

"Even as the artist in the pictured hall,
I have had visions fair, too fair to stay;
And on the wings of poesy away
Have sought to fly above this earthly ball, —
To fly, alas, and afterwards to fall,
Their early strength gone from my wings for aye.
The fable-book of youth is shut to-day,
And now I see the moral of it all."

But what is the use of complaining of one's impotence? —

"What is more laughable than to repine
In elegies upon one's lyric dearth, —
To scribble poems, dead at their very birth,
And of a gloomy, broken heart to whine?"

A hateful spirit visits him now and then in evil hours, and whispers words of doubt and despondency in his ear.

“When speaks that voice to me with bated breath,
I seem to hear the peal of funeral chimes,
I seem to feel the clammy kiss of death;”

but the apparition no longer terrifies him. He is no longer a child; he understands now what it all means. The spirit hovers about the “last flower” remaining, rank and uncared for, from his spring-time.

“My anxious thoughts assume this flower shape;
They make me tremble between hope and fear;
From faith to doubt my mind is made to veer.

“They twine as lovingly about my soul
As cling the tendrils of the living grape
In Southern vineyards to the rootless pole.”

So great was at times Ibsen's lack of confidence in himself that he felt the need of employing words as passionate as these; so depressed did he feel, when the courage of life and faith in his poetic gifts were at their ebb, that he could find the adequate expression of his mood only in such despondent and despairing phrases. When we read these poems we begin to appreciate the reason of the wonderful delicacy and comprehension displayed in the portrayal of Skule's sceptical nature.

But when “The Pretenders” was written, this stage of spiritual conflict was passed. Like the

young poet in "Love's Comedy," Ibsen required, like the falcon, the aid of adverse winds to gain the heights. His was one of those natures which are not subdued but rise under adverse conditions. As the bitter quinine gives strength to the nerves, so the bitterness of his circumstances strengthened, little by little, his confidence in himself.

Many pleasant things may undoubtedly be said of the Norwegian capital, but no one would think of calling it a town in which literature and art flourish. From its condition, at the beginning of the century, as a town of 10,000 inhabitants, it has grown up to be a city with truly American rapidity, and has not only reached its first hundred thousand of population, but has got well along into the second. Christiania may even be called an overgrown city, and it is a familiar fact that too rapid growth does not tend to attractiveness.

Christiania is a new colony with pretensions to be considered a centre of culture. It has grown so fast that it struts about and claims to be a piece of Europe. Yet it is in reality so small that its inhabitants lack elbow-room; they push and thrust one another, and tread on one another's toes, because they have not room to keep out of each other's way. Gossip and personal criticism are incredibly rife; if a tenant of the barnyard lose a feather, the loss is magnified, by the help

of friends and acquaintances, into that of half a dozen hens. And the people are as unready to recognize merit as they are ready to detract. In larger societies, where men are not so cramped for lack of space, there is more good-will, and the recognition of one does not preclude the recognition of another. But here there is a narrowness of view which seems to be based upon the proverb,—"There is not room for two great ones in a bag."

If one endeavor to rise, it must be at the expense of the others. And men are as dependent in their judgments as they are dogmatic. They always wait for the outsider to speak. The author, for example, who will conquer Christiania, must first conquer Copenhagen, even at the present day.

Artistic and literary productivity is naturally hampered by this state of affairs. Many become weary, and end by conforming to the general indifference and lack of interest everywhere about them. They lose courage and energy, and bid farewell to their ambitions. Others are made bitter and discontented, and thus express themselves. If one were to collect all the complaints made against Christiania in the literature of the present century, a fine anthology would be the result.

No Norwegian poet has sung in praise of Chris-

tiania. Wergeland is the only one who might be mentioned, and he, characteristically enough, confined himself to expressions of satisfaction at the growth of the city. Later on, he came to know it better, his satisfaction vanished, and he bitterly bewailed having been born in Norway; he even thought seriously of seeking a foreign audience. And Welhaven, who was quite well treated, has expressed clearly enough his opinion: —

“The manners of a court are here at fray
With petty village ways and views of life,
Upon a field ill-fitted for the strife,
And neither of the parties gains the day.”

Thus he wrote in “The Twilight.” And this was not all; for, in “Soirée Pictures,” he carried the idea still further. To know just how he felt, read “The Thundered Menace.”

“Think of the sufferings of a restless mind
By fogs and brooding darkness here confined.”

Camilla Collett has contributed so frequently to the collection that several pages would be required to print what she has said. Only to quote a few lines from one eloquent example, we read in “The Magistrate’s Daughters”: “Oh, thou great, thou little town, how cold and dark a cloud hangs over thee! Thou art great enough, thou thousand-beaked, great enough to pick to death him who no longer amuses thee, or him who has in-

curred thy dislike. But thou art not great enough for such a wretch to find any nook in which to hide. Great art thou; thou hast all the longings and the consuming passions of a great city; yet how small thou art and poor, that thou mayst not satisfy the least of them."

Björnson's voice is also heard. In the epilogue to the first edition of his "Poems and Songs," he describes the struggle between horse and tiger in the Spanish arena, and tells how the enraged public hooted and hissed the tiger when the horse held his own.

"Who won at last I cannot say;
The horse's part 't is mine to play,
And the struggle is not over.
What is the town where this occurred,
And where these cries of rage were heard,
You may perhaps discover."

A characteristic observation to be made in this connection is that none of our more conspicuous living poets have homes in the Norwegian capital. They have either remained in the country, as Björnson did for a series of years, or they have hidden, like Kielland, in some small village. As a rule, they have gone into voluntary exile for a longer or shorter period. Their more important literary productions have been shaped, of late years, in Paris, Rome, or Munich, — not in Christiania.

As for Ibsen, he had better occasion than any other to appreciate the disposition of Christiania during the years that he directed the Norwegian theatre of the capital. There seems to have been but few who had any idea that he was a great poet, even after he had furnished proof of the fact by means of such works as "The Chieftains" and "Love's Comedy."

When "The Chieftains" appeared, it was rather coldly received; Björnson's "Synnöve" had appeared previously, and public opinion seemed to claim for him a sort of monopoly in the renewal of the style of the saga. Ibsen was put into the shade, and, during the controversy that arose in connection with the rejection of his piece, a great many rude things were said about him by anonymous writers for the newspapers. He was not only charged with dishonesty and "boundless vanity," but was also told that his piece (which was not then printed) was probably, to judge from his earlier efforts, a work of slight value,—such expressions as "Norwegian weeds" and "Norwegian trash" being made use of. "Herr Ibsen as a dramatic author is a complete nonentity, about whom the nation can hardly be expected to plant a protecting hedge," was written; and it was said of "Fru Inger of Oestraat," upon the same occasion, that it "is so bereft of

poetry and ideality as to be an object of wonder; every character in this piece has the stamp of vulgarity."

When "Love's Comedy" appeared, things grew worse rather than better. "Morgenbladet" declared that the conception of love in the play was "provincial indeed," such as might have been expected of some country uncle or aunt, but could not have occurred to a poet. The point of view of the piece was "not alone essentially untrue," and "immoral," but "unpoetical, as must be every view which is unable to reconcile the real and the ideal." And even this was nothing as compared with the criticism of "Aftenbladet." Although Ibsen had worked over three years upon the play, it was characterized as "a pitiful product of literary trifling;" it was "a commendation of celibacy, showing that H. Ibsen must have had Roman Catholic notions in his head when he wrote it;" as a dramatic whole it was "an absurdity," and, besides, its author was by no means a remarkable poet. "Ibsen does not possess what is called genius; he has merely talent, which takes a markedly technical and mechanical direction."

With the public the book raised "a storm of indignation, fiercer and more widespread than many books can boast of in a community where the large majority look upon literary affairs as

matters of no general interest.”¹ The thing was carried so far that when, some time afterwards, Ibsen applied for a travelling stipend, one of the professors at the university declared that “the person who had written ‘Love’s Comedy’ deserved a stick rather than a stipend.”

In his capacity as theatrical director also, Ibsen had his full measure of annoyance. Actresses who felt themselves slighted attacked him in the newspapers, and his authority in the town was not great enough to save him from being reviled on account of any beginner who fancied, or whose admirers fancied, that he had been treated slightly. He was blamed also for the language spoken on the stage; some thought the actors were too Norwegian in their speech; others, that they were not Norwegian enough; still others complained because Ibsen did not have a French countess speak in ostentatiously Norwegian fashion.

So there was irritation upon all sides; and this was the more annoying to Ibsen because the theatre was working under extremely unfavorable financial conditions. The city was not large enough to support two competing theatres, and the result was short commons for both. In the summer of 1862 the Norwegian theatre became bankrupt, and Ibsen was, in consequence, left in

¹ Ibsen’s own words in the preface to the second edition.

the lurch. The only income upon which he could count was the twelve hundred crowns that had been granted him as artistic adviser by the Christiania theatre from the beginning of 1863. For this sum he not only gave his literary advice, but was obliged as well to see that the costumes were accurate, and to mount pieces when called upon to do so.

Since Björnson had been granted the "poet's salary" in 1863, Ibsen endeavored to obtain a similar allowance from the public treasury, but his demand was not entertained. The only public stipend granted him was a small sum given to enable him to travel about Norway for the purpose of collecting the popular poetry of the country.

He was, then, practically, forced to "live by his pen," as the saying is; but this is a mode of subsistence upon which one does not grow fat under Norwegian conditions, especially if, like Ibsen, one feels neither the wish nor the faculty to enter journalism.

The *honoraria* paid him by the publishers were almost incredibly small. For "Love's Comedy" he received but one hundred specie dalers, and this was a large *honorarium* for the period. For "Fru Inger" and "The Chieftains" he did not get half as much; and when the Christiania theatre finally found it convenient to produce the piece

last named, he was put off by the management with a mere bagatelle, — being informed that, since the piece was in print, the theatre had a right to produce it without paying the author a skilling. For a poet like Ibsen, whose severe self-criticism pulled to pieces every work newly begun, the moment when it failed to satisfy him, literary activity, as a mode of subsistence under these circumstances, was not far from being synonymous with starvation. So low were his finances at this time that some of his friends, — according to a biographical sketch published in the "*Norsk Folkeblad*" for 1869, — set out in real earnest to use their influence in procuring for him a subordinate position in the custom-house, or some similar means of livelihood. A cheerful outlook for the author of "*The Chieftains*" and "*Love's Comedy*," to preside over the customs' scales, and calculate the duty on bags of sugar and coffee!

To add to this private wretchedness came the war between Denmark and Germany. Ibsen's enthusiasm of 1848 was still alive, and the shape taken by events filled him with grief and indignation. With his warm poetic enthusiasm he could not understand, and still less could he share, the hesitation of the Norwegian national assembly to join with Denmark, and worse than all this was the fact that the academic youth of the country

remained quietly at home, although in their student gatherings they had sworn, — their champagne glasses lifted in pledge thereof, — to sacrifice life and blood in Denmark's cause.

“ The words flowed forth as if from out
The very heart they came ;
They were but phrases, and a drought
Now follows to our shame !
The tree bade fair to bloom, in sooth,
Beneath the sunbeams bright ;
Now stripped by tempests without ruth,
It marks the grave of Norway's youth,
Upon the first dark night.

“ 'T was but a lie then, nothing worth,
A Judas kiss of hate,
That proudly Norway's sons put forth
Down by the Sound of late.”

A feeling of the pettiness of it all burned within him, and mankind appeared to him in a gloomier aspect than ever before. He felt himself glow with scorn for the nation to which he belonged.

Before this he had viewed his country less and less favorably. In “ Love's Comedy ” he had attacked the crudity of sentiment that he had observed ; and even in the historical drama of “ The Pretenders ” he had found place for an outburst against pettiness and lack of individuality, which shows how his indignation was increasing. We recall the famous verses of Bishop Nikolas in the fifth act, —

“Norway’s men on their way are going,
Irresolute, wavering, whither not knowing;
Like pliant willows swayed by the wind,
Dry of heart, and stealthy of mind.
On one thing only can they agree,
That a great man must stoned and hooted be;
Beggary’s clout as a flag is raised,
And honor takes flight from them amazed.”

The whole of the ghost scene, in which these lines occur, really stands quite apart from the play, and is, dramatically, so obvious a mistake that we may wonder that a dramatist of Henrik Ibsen’s rank should have penned it; but the fact simply was, that his indignation had grown so strong that he could not restrain it; it had to find expression, even at the expense of the dramatic structure of such a work as “The Pretenders.”

But if these were his feelings during the summer of 1863, what must he have felt the following winter? What was everything he had before seen and experienced compared with what he came to see and experience during the war? The “bitter tonic” that should give him strength to break new paths, was at hand. He had had enough of Norway and of Northmen. His aim now was to gain the tranquillity and independence needed to enable him to clarify and to shape all the new ideas that were working in his mind. He must escape from the hampering conditions of his life in Christiania;

he must away from the whole petty round, he must put himself in the position to look at it all from a distance, to gain "a higher view of the matter." As a poet, there was no future for him here at home; he felt as if he were standing on "the edge of his grave," as he afterward expressed it in a poem written for the millennial celebration. And the grave was Christiania, situated in the churchyard called Norway.

"From this sultry hole away!
Here the air smells of the grave;
Here no outspread banner may
Freely in the breezes wave!"¹

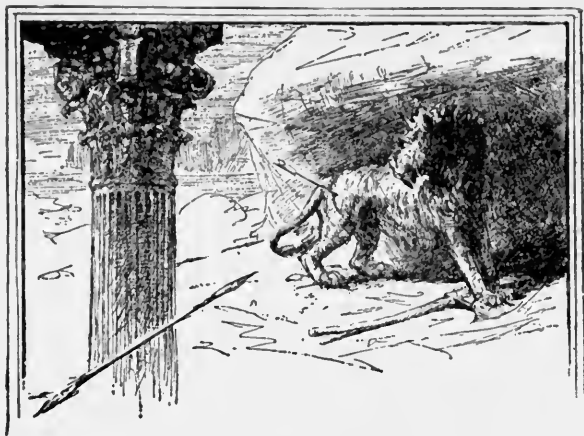
When he made his application to the government for a travelling stipend he felt it to be a matter of life and death; and when the application was really granted, he felt that it brought him salvation.

But even these last moments at home were not to pass without their characteristic annoyances. It devolved upon the university to decide upon such applications as that which Ibsen had made, and that institution was not to be surpassed in pettiness by the rest of the town. It was upon this occasion that the suggestion concerning the stick was made, and, to crown the work, a grant of but half the sum he had applied for was recom-

¹ BRAND.

mended. This made the stipend so small that it could be considered neither fish nor fowl. So Ibsen went to the head of the Department of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, State Councillor Riddervold, and explained to him the situation. The result was that this official granted the entire sum asked for, on behalf of the department of which he was chief.

The 2d of April, 1864, Ibsen shook the dust of Christiania from his feet. May found him in Berlin, and thence he set forth for Trieste and Rome.



IV.

CONTROVERSIAL PERIOD.

THE traveller from the North, who first catches sight of Italy or of the Mediterranean, is always deeply impressed; and especially he who, like Ibsen, goes by way of Trieste. During the night one passes through southern Austria, and, waking up before sunrise, looks out of the railway carriage window. One can hardly imagine anything more barren and desert-like than the surrounding landscape. The way leads over a vast plain, over which are scattered weather-beaten rocks, which tower up in the most singular shapes. This is the so-called "Karst." The sun rises, but its light cannot make this gray and stony desert appear less barren or more cheerful. Suddenly

the train turns a sharp curve, the way leads down a terraced and vine-clad slope, and the blue Adriatic appears far below, decked with white sails that gleam in the sunlight far out upon the horizon. He who has known such a morning hour, can never forget it.

From Trieste the road goes on to Venice and farther, amid the loveliest and most smiling landscapes. How luxuriant the vegetation and how bright the colors! Wherever we go, the light shines, gleams, sparkles; it seems to us as if we had never seen any color but gray before; the very sky is different, loftier, more transparent, deeper of hue. And when the sun goes down, and the night falls, sudden as a surprise, the moon comes out, the radiant moon of the Italian summer night. One may perhaps faintly conceive it by recalling the moonlight of an August evening in Norway. The brightness and beauty of the light make one fairly wild with enthusiasm, make one wander for hours over moonlit fields and through dark groves where the fireflies flit about, sparkling like diamonds in the foliage.

And besides these impressions of nature, Ibsen received also impressions from the relics of ancient civilization to be seen on all hands in the city which became his dwelling-place. The greatness, wealth, and beauty of that civilization appeared

to him in their most imposing form, and he endeavored, during his excursions about Rome, to make himself familiar with its monuments of past splendor. The study of this testimony to a past civilization and of these ruins that told of its downfall, made Ibsen resolve to treat the downfall dramatically, and he planned a play in which Julian the Apostate should be the principal figure, even beginning to put the plan into execution. But impressions of a different and more personal nature soon got the upper hand. They were impressions that he had brought from home. The very contrast offered by his present surroundings made these impressions all the more distinct for him. He felt as if his whole life in Norway had been spent in the dark; it seemed to him as to Oswald, that he could not recall ever having seen the sun shine at home.¹ He had the feeling of having escaped from some gloomy dungeon where he had languished in chains; and, like the freed prisoner, he vowed to himself that he would never return. How poor, cold, confined, and petty was everything at home!

And there emerged from all these thoughts and feelings a series of old impressions of nature in

¹ A reference to "Ghosts." There is something similar in "Brand."

"I never saw a sunlit sky,
From fall of leaf to cuckoo-cry."

Norway, which grew to typical intensity under the influence of the contrast between past and present. On one of his commissioned expeditions in search of popular poetry he had, in the summer of 1862, taken a pedestrian trip through the Jötunheim mountains. He started from Lom, and crossed the range from Bæverdalen to Fortun. The view down from the mountain height into the narrow Fortun valley, with its steep and savage slopes, was one of the memories that awoke within him. Then he had journeyed from Vadeim over Förde to the commercial town of Hellesylt in Sundelven, where he had sojourned for several days. Close by stood the ruins of a parsonage, destroyed by an avalanche. Fearing further landslides, it had not been rebuilt, and the pastor, with his wife and infant child, were lodging with a peasant upon the mountain side. Ibsen made them a visit and asked the pastor's wife, a young and amiable lady with a cheerful smile, if they were not still afraid of a landslide. "No," she replied, "the house lies so close up to the mountain wall that a slide would pass over without touching it."

These impressions of travel were put together by Ibsen's fancy into the picture of a mountain valley which we see in "Brand." And with this mountain valley a new conception of Norwegian nature found literary expression.

The poets of preceding periods had dwelt only upon the gentle and graceful aspects of our natural scenery. Reading their poems, a stranger might almost believe that we have a mild and lovely summer all the year round. Fine "sun effects" almost always made of the barest spot "a gleaming little land of fable," as Welhaven puts it; it is of fair forests and mountains, fragrant with the odor of the spruce, and made melodious by the song of birds, that we read in Asbjørnsen's fairy tales; and of soft summer evenings that the poems of Jørgen Moe tell. Even in darker moods nature was still gentle. So melancholy a nature as Bernhard Herre went no further than to describe the sadness of autumn; and an elegiac poet like A. Munch was contented with bemoaning the brief Northern summer. No one pictured the harshness and poverty of Norwegian nature. It was always mild and graceful, whether we saw it with Synnøve at Solbakken or with Thorbjorn at Granleden. If a poet ventured for once to engage with our mountain scenery, as Welhaven did in "Eivind Bolt," it was but to sing the sublimity of the impression made by the mountains upon us; and if winter were pictured, as by Jørgen Moe in "A Sleigh Ride," and by Welhaven in "The Race Track," the poet had an eye only for its magical beauty. Ibsen himself contributed to this glori-

fication of Norwegian scenery when he drew, in "Mountain Life," a delicate and glowing picture of the mountains, "in their splendor of amber and gold."

Now let "Brand" be taken up and the contrast will be evident. We seem to be transported to another country, many degrees further to the north. The snow drifts, the storm rages, the ice hangs heavy and threatening upon the mountain side, and the sunlight never reaches the dwellers in the valley; only at midsummer, for a period of some three weeks, is its light seen at all, and then only on the mountain slope. Everything delicate is chilled, grows sickly, and dies; the grain does not ripen, dearth and famine hover over the settlement as a curse. Such is the mountain valley in "Brand."

But this mountain valley grew upon Henrik Ibsen's imagination until it became the typical Norwegian landscape; in "Brand" it stands for Norway, just as, in "Peder Paars," Anholt stands for Denmark. The valley people are the whole Norwegian people; and no less novel than the poet's conception of nature is his conception of the people, as compared with that previously current in literature. The poets of an earlier period had burnt much incense to the Norwegian nation. Soon after 1814 they began to sing with enthusi-

asm of "the mountain's son," and the enthusiasm lasted for two or three decades. When the romantic spirit began to assert itself in the forties, this enthusiasm underwent but a slight change in character. Previously, it had raved about the free and proud peasant-proprietor; now the ideal peasant of the poet, living his careless life as in a dream, unconcerned by the trivial and prosaic interests of the day, became the object of its admiration.

But the people of Ibsen's mountain valley are not poetic figures of this sort. They are people who toil hard to win their subsistence from grudging nature; they are blunted and worn by labor, their heads are bowed, their backs are bent, their gaze is upon the mould, their thought creeps like a worm upon its belly, instead of taking flight like a bird. The struggle for bread comes to be the essential, comes to be the whole of life.

"All your *pater noster*, even,
Without wings of will is found,
By so little fear is stirred,
That within the gates of heaven —
Vibrant as a voice should sound —
Number four¹ alone is heard!
That the watchword of the land,
That the war-cry of the race,
Torn from out its proper place,
• Every heart it holds in fief,
And your tempest-tossed belief
Lies a wreck upon the strand."

¹ The fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Even if the people were simply and wholly a race of drudges they might have a certain character of their own, but instead of this they squint heavenward with one eye while the other is fixed upon the earth ; thence arises the indecision and lack of character that distinguish them as a nation.

“ Go but about the land, and when
You listen to all sorts of men,
How each has learned, you soon may see,
A little of everything to be.
A little serious on occasion,
A little faith from former days,
A little love of dissipation,
Still following in his father's ways, —
A little warmth, such as belongs
To hours of mirth and festal songs,
Among our little mountain-folk
That never yet a beating took ;
In promises a little free,
A little sharp, when soberly
He weighs the lightly spoken phrase,
Called to account in after days.
Yet far, as all examples teach,
His faults, his virtues, do not reach ;
A fraction he, in small and great,
For good and ill, a fraction's weight.
And then, alas, and worst of all,
These fractions do not fit at all.”

And like unto the nation is its conception of
God : —

“ The Saviour, in the Catholic plan,
Is pictured as a child ; but here,
Your Lord is but a weak old man,
Who is his second childhood near.

- He, like the race, is growing old,
And wears a skull-cap for the cold."

At the same time that he makes this attack upon the nation the author turns his sharpened weapon upon its official representatives. They are responsible for it all. First of all there is the bailiff, who has grown to be so entirely official that he has ceased to be a man. If he is called on for help, he does not ask how pressing is the need, but only whether the case comes within his bailiwick; and when his dwelling takes fire, he cares deuced little about saving his soul, provided only he can save his official records. He is a charitable man, working for the interest of his district, but he has only an eye for the material. Increase of population, aids to subsistence, the development of means of communication, — these are the aims which he boasts of having furthered, and his great philanthropic dream of the future is to build an ingenious combination of public hall, polling-place, madhouse, poorhouse, and lockup. If this plan might only be carried out, then nothing would be wanting. What besides remains is an inspiration of the Evil One, unless we except a little poetry for the evening hours, and a little good-fellowship and speech-making when the punch is brought on at village parties. Besides being bailiff he is a member of the Storting, and the lash touches

him in this capacity when Brand describes him as

“ A popular type, not worse
Than that ; a man upright and kind,
In his way active, fair of mind,
Yet to the land a very curse.
Not avalanche, wintry blast, or flood,
Famine, infection of the blood,
Works half the havoc far and near,
As such a one from year to year.
Those scourges touch our lives alone,
But he! — How many hopes o’erthrown,
How many generous motions crushed,
How many mighty songs are hushed,
By such a small, contracted mind !
How many a smile to lips that stole,
How many a glow within the soul,
How many a vow that might, at need,
Have ripened into noble deed,
Has been to death by him consigned ! ”

The dean is rather worse than better ; as the bailiff leaves everything of an elevating character for holidays and festival occasions, so the dean leaves religion for Sundays. Men must work on week-days ; they need be stirred only on Sunday, when it is the pastor’s duty to discourse to them of the ideal ; but he must put a stop to even this as soon as he has come down from the pulpit. A clergyman is not the spiritual guardian of the individual members of the community ; he is, first and foremost, an official in the service of the state. He must first do what the state requires, and then look after his own interests. Finally, in the persons

of the schoolmaster and the sexton, the lower representatives of officialdom are made sport of. The schoolmaster, who, as well as the bailiff, has been a member of the Storthing, says to his colleague: —

“ But we too have a different law
From that which governs most men’s action ;
We are the servants of the state,
Our part it is to keep things straight,
Virtue and science to protect,
And passion’s promptings to reject,
In short, to stand outside of faction.”

And afterward, when they hear Brand playing upon the organ in the church, they are given the following characteristic dialogue: —

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Hm, — that might move one, on condition —

THE SEXTON.

Yes, were one not a functionary.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

A due regard for our position
Must make us of expression chary.

THE SEXTON.

Yet, were you not compelled to think,
Might send to the devil pen and ink, —

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

If you were free to feel, instead
Of tolling church-bells for the dead, —

THE SEXTON.

Friend, no one sees us, — let us feel !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

'T would be unfitting to reveal
That we are human in our hearts.
The teaching that the priest imparts
Says that no man should play two parts;
Not even he who would be can
At once official be, and man.

These frequent denunciations of officialdom as the cause of popular stupidity and materialism are based in part upon the peculiar conditions of the period, and in part upon the theory of government which — influenced, to a certain extent, by those very conditions — Henrik Ibsen had shaped.

The greater portion of the period that had elapsed, from the time of his attainment to manhood to the time of his leaving Norway, had been a dull and material period, — a golden age for officialdom, since administrative activity played the chief part in the history of those years. Questions of national importance, like those of the theatre and of the royal vice-regency, had indeed arisen and made a considerable stir, but those who were responsible for this agitation were regarded by the majority as disturbers of the peace and wild demagogues. That with which opinion was chiefly concerned was neither the independence of the nation, nor its intellectual development, but rather its economic welfare. So roads were laid out, large and stately district-prisons erected, commercial re-

lations improved, new means of subsistence provided, temperance associations founded, and many other useful things done. Unfortunately, it was fancied that to do these things was the sum of the nation's obligations. Anything that looked beyond the material was purely visionary, and required to be suppressed. The people should be of one mind, just like the employés of a business house or the soldiers of a company; the ideal citizen was the characterless average man, with no distinct traits, and the rule of life was to cling humbly and uncomplainingly to earth. It was said with the dean in "Brand": —

"If you will think, you soon will see,
My little flock, what's for your best.
Can yours be any great behest?
How may you set the bondman free?
You have your little daily task,
And more than this you should not ask.
Your arms, how useless in the fray!
'T is yours to guard your homes to-day.
'Twixt wolf and bear what would you do?
'Twixt hawk and eagle where were you?
You would but fall the victor's prey."

It was this cowardly materialism, Ibsen felt, that was responsible for the stand taken by Norway at the time of the war between Denmark and Germany, and the poem often makes reference to it.

But the root of his discontent went deeper than the conditions of the time and place; it really

grew from the modern idea of the state, and toward that the author eventually directs his attack in the name of freedom and individualism. This attack is also made in the unconscious person of the dean: —

“ The state you ’ll find, if it you scan,
Exactly half republican.
Freedom it hates as ’t were the pest ;
Equality, it thinks, is best.
But that you never can attain
Till to one plane all things you level ;
Since this you do not, there remain
Great inequalities ; the evil
Grows greater than it was before ;
Distinctions count for more and more ;
The servant of the church of yore
An individual of late
Has grown, and weakened is the state.”

All should be made to keep the same pace, —

“ For each man his appointed place ;
That all keep step as formerly,
Should now, as then, our object be.”

The corporal is the ideal leader, and the church, as a part of the regulative machinery of the state, must follow its methods ; the priest must learn of the corporal to lead his followers in unbroken step through life to paradise.

So the attack upon the Norwegian people, begun as a satire of officialdom, is developed into a polemical discussion of the state as an institu-

tion, and of the official church as a part of the apparatus of government.

In contrast with everything that is thus attacked, Ibsen has given us Brand. That in which the people are lacking he possesses in superabundance; he is the incarnation of will and idealism, of force and enthusiasm. With all the strength of his simple and massive personality he confronts the prevailing spirit of compromise with his inexorable "all or nothing;" and, as the champion of individuality, he leads the fight against the representatives of officialdom, both temporal and spiritual. We are not necessarily to identify Brand with Ibsen; for, although Brand is an ideal creation, his is not a fixed character from the start, any more than are the principal figures of Ibsen's other dramas; his character is developed with the action of the poem. Although we perceive Ibsen in all that Brand says, he becomes nowhere wholly identified with his hero. He has endeavored to shape a figure ideally in contrast with those actual qualities against which his satire is directed, and this design has determined the character of Brand. The development of the poem is the gradual growth, in Brand's mind, of the conviction that the two conceptions of life are irreconcilable. His purpose is so to arouse and to steel the people that

the individual may arise from his torpor as a distinct personality; and to this end he declares war upon the representatives of officialdom. As, for example, when he says to the bailiff, —

“ The people, that so long has drownded
Beneath your rule, shall be aroused !
For long enough their spirit in
Your narrow cage confined has been ;
They who adopt your regimen
Mopish and dull go forth again.
The nation's best blood you have lapped,
The best part of its courage sapped ;
Souls have been crushed at your command,
That firm as adamant should stand ;
But now the day of vengeance nears,
And war-cries thunder in your ears.”

He opens his warfare with officialdom by becoming one of its representatives, — by becoming the priest of his native town. He indeed creates a stir and awakens those around him to new life, yet he does not feel altogether satisfied. He does not seem quite able to find room for his ideals in his present environment. The church is too small for the God of whom he testifies, and so he resolves to build a larger one; but, in putting this resolution into effect, he comes to realize that he himself, the spokesman of the logical, has been occupying an uncertain and illogical position. The dean's words concerning the relation between church and state arouse him

to full consciousness of the falsity of his position; and, with the declaration that the spirit of compromise is Satan himself, he breaks away from the whole accursed system, — this rupture being symbolically indicated by his act of locking the church door and flinging the key into the river. The tragic feature of his destiny lies in the too tardy realization that leads to this breach, in his having made all his sacrifices in vain, in the fact that he, with all his passionate craving for completeness and thoroughness, has himself bowed down to the spirit of compromise, to the Tempter himself. Brand is then by no means an ideal figure, as the term is commonly understood, but a militant character, developed in the very heat of combat; and, however fully he may be the spokesman of Ibsen's controversial notions, the latter has shaped him in so objective a fashion that he appears a distinct character, not a mere speaking-trumpet.

Artistically viewed, he is a fanciful creation, not a figure from real life; he stands in contrast to the real rather than represents it. And yet the impulse which led Ibsen to shape such a figure is to be found in an actual impression.

At the time, "Brand" was regarded as an essentially Christian poem, mainly because Brand is a priest. It was generally looked upon as a

sermon of the brimstone and hell-fire description. Yet Ibsen had already given warning against such a misconception. He allows Einar to fall into this error when he represents him as saying to Brand:

“Yours is the brood of those who feign
That men are dust, and life is vain;
The soul with fear you work upon,
Sackcloth and ashes to put on.”

To which Brand replies, —

“No, I am not a preacher,
Nor do I speak as priests for hire;
I may not even Christian be,
But as a man I take my stand;
And this I know, that I can see
The curse that lies upon this land.”

In the last four of these lines Brand's character is given with the conciseness of a definition; and, that there may be no doubt at all about the matter, he says shortly afterward, —

“Nor do I in my work pretend
Or church or dogma to defend;
From some beginning both are dated,
And so it easily may be
That we the end of both shall see, —
Their *finis* have all things created.”

But back of all this, man himself, with his possibilities of full and symmetrical development, remains as a permanent factor, and him would Brand raise from the mire. As we see, his standpoint is far from being that of the pietist, — Einar,

in his missionary period, stands for the pietistic view of life, — it is not even a religious standpoint. If we read such lines as these, —

“ With joy no hearts are breaking here.
'Twere well indeed, if that were all
Our cause for grief; if pleasure's thrall
Thou art, be that from year to year;
But be not that to-day, to-morrow,
And then next year a prey to sorrow;
Be altogether what thou art, —
Be something wholly, not in part,”

we shall understand how purely human is the author's standpoint. As the attack upon the church forms only a part of the controversial contents of the poem, so the religious element is but one factor in Brand's character. Besides, Ibsen has himself declared that Brand's priestly character and the fact that the problem is given a religious statement, are unessential elements. “I might have embodied the syllogism in the person of a sculptor or a politician as well as in that of a priest,” he wrote to Georg Brandes.

However, the fact that Brand is represented as a priest was not wholly the result of accident. The actual observations upon which the figure was based were made among the clergy.

Danish critics, Brandes among them, and, following in his footsteps, the majority of the German writers who have dealt with Ibsen of late, have

treated him in connection with Sören Kierkegaard, and assumed the poem to have been suggested by the writings of the latter, and by the agitation led by him against the established church. It is easy to understand how this misconception has arisen among foreigners, not intimately acquainted with Norwegian conditions, for the points of resemblance are obvious. When Kierkegaard bewails the pitiable character of the age, when he exalts the individual, and pours his scorn upon society, when he attacks official Christianity from the standpoint of a broad humanity, and when he, a theologian who had even been a preacher, declares, at the close of his life, that, sooner than enter a church, he would commit the grossest of crimes, the analogy which he offers to Brand is sufficiently apparent.

In spite of this, we are but crossing the stream to fetch water when we look to Kierkegaard for the actual model upon which "Brand" was based. At the time when "Brand" was written Ibsen knew almost nothing of Sören Kierkegaard; he had not read half a dozen sheets of his writings, — a little of "Either — Or," and some of "The Moment," that was all. The course of Kierkegaard's last agitation was followed in Norway, and naturally aroused a certain interest there, but it made little impression upon Ibsen, and he never

felt called to be "Kierkegaard's poet," although the term has been applied to him.

On the other hand, his attention had been very strongly held by the agitation which Pastor G. A. Lammers had aroused, towards the close of the fifties, in Ibsen's native town of Skien.

Lammers was forty-six years old, and had been a priest for more than twenty years, when he was appointed parish priest of Skien. Shortly thereafter, his health required him to take a rather lengthy trip abroad, and upon his return he entered upon the religious movement that since has borne his name. To begin with, the ceremony of absolution and certain others of the ecclesiastical ordinances troubled his conscience. In 1855, he applied for, and obtained, a chaplain, who was to assume the duties which he felt himself unable to discharge; but this did not satisfy him altogether, so, in June, 1856, he applied for leave and a pension. Soon thereafter, he took a step by which his pension was forfeited; he left the established church and founded a "Free Apostolic-Christian Communion" in Skien. In his application for leave he stated that his position brought him upwards of 5000 crowns yearly, and that he was the father of two children, unprovided for. His pastoral activity in Skien had made much stir. Some warmly sided with him; others met

him with "opposition, scorn, and mockery." We read in a contemporary account that he "fearlessly chastised irregularities, sin, and vice, in both public and private life." He had an assistant, a school-teacher, who "went about the town, entering every house, asking after every family, and, as far as possible, after every individual member of the community, and inquiring into his temporal and spiritual condition." He was a stern and imperious priest, thundering against every frailty that he fancied he discovered, and administering the severest chastisement to all manner of worldliness.

But, if his activity while a priest of the established church had caused a stir, matters became much worse when he stepped out. His farewell sermon lies printed before me, and it is interesting reading. The Norwegian church has never, before or afterwards, been so powerfully attacked from its own pulpit. Upon a previous occasion he had called the churches comedy-houses; in the farewell sermon he offers proof of the statement. "I endeavored to carry out the injunctions of our state church," he says, "or rather, as far as possible, the idea which they embody; but I soon felt the task impossible, for the church seeks to enforce by legislation that which can only become truth unto salvation under conditions of the

most absolute freedom." The sacraments were not for each and every one, "but for them alone who in truth turn unto the Lord." "The impenitent and unbelieving should have no part in them, even if they are not outwardly sinful men, unless it is evident that they wish to become converted." Infant baptism was also an absurdity. "Better unbaptized and unconfirmed children! Better be honestly heathen than thus conform to civil conditions, using the ceremonial of the church to protect and perpetuate a race of liars and hypocrites! Better forsake everything to which the world clings than take part longer in this terrible play!" He even denounced the marriage ceremony because of the questions which the priest puts to the bridal couple, and he was equally opposed to the burial service. "I may even say that so-called Christian burial in so-called Christian earth has been a cause of grief to my soul, and seemed to me an encouragement to both impenitence and unbelief, not merely when false and misleading discourses are delivered over the dead (and we hear such with terrible frequency, especially when the dead and his mourners belong to the more cultivated and intelligent classes), but also when witness is borne of truth unto resurrection, he who is laid to rest having no sure hope of being reckoned with the dead

who die in the Lord, and yet being consecrated to his new life with tribute of flowers and sacred song. It is not ours to condemn the departed; neither is it ours to absolve him." After going on in this fashion for quite a while, he ends his sermon with a prayer "that the day come, if that be possible, when here in this so-called house of God, that shall no longer be done which is contrary to God's will, and when here in this fair valley of the Lord, which his creative hand has so nobly shaped, here in our streets and our ways, in our houses and our fields, above our waters and beneath our woods, there shall no longer be heard blasphemies, and seen shameful idolatries, but instead of them prayer to the living God in spirit and in truth, on holy days and week-days, while resting and while toiling in the sweat of the brow, in joy and in affliction."¹ Ibsen knew Lammers personally, and was deeply impressed by his manly and intrepid stand. The points of resemblance between Lammers and Brand are obvious, reaching even to details, and when we read how Lammers gathered his flock about him and went out into the fields or up the mountain slope to hold divine service, we per-

¹ This sermon, as well as a sketch of his plan for a "Free Apostolic-Christian Communion," were published by Lammers in Skien (1856).

ceive a striking similarity to Brand's conduct. "Kierkegaard was too much of a closet agitator," Ibsen once said in a conversation with the author of this book; "Lammers, on the other hand, was an open-air agitator, like Brand." But here, as upon other occasions, Ibsen has handled his material with freedom; it has served him as a starting-point, not as an end. His object was not to present and explain a character like that of Lammers; he has merely made use of the serviceable elements of that character.

His real object was to show how crying the contrast

"Between things as they really are,
And as they rightfully should be."

Hence the rough form which is given to the poem. It is a philippic, a thundered appeal; it strikes home; it has in it no word of concession. It was first begun by Ibsen as an epic poem; when he afterward gave preference to the dramatic form, he considered dramatic requirements only in so far as they were fitted to his polemical aim. He gave little attention to probability or to strict dramatic motive; those matters were of little consequence in the ideal sphere in which his hero was placed; he did not even take pains to make his characters speak as it might be supposed that they actually would speak; he was so engaged by his contro-

versial and satirical aims that his characters were made to satirize themselves in comically overdrawn descriptions. After Einar's conversion he speaks of himself in the following fashion: —

“ The tub of faith has washed me clean,
There is no spot upon me seen;
The washing-board of sanctity
From mud has scrubbed me wholly free;
And then my Adam's garment I
Have cleansed with righteousness's lye;
No surplice half so white and fair
As I, thus purified by prayer.”

The bailiff, the dean, the schoolmaster, and the sexton give themselves smart buffets of this sort. There is war to the knife from first to last; no quarter is given, and there is no cessation of hostilities except in the scenes where Agnes appears. She brings an element of gentleness and reconciliation into the midst of all this hard and earnest fighting; she is like a stream of open water running in the middle of a frozen river; all the author's warmth of feeling has found in her a vent, and this makes of her a wonderfully inviting figure amidst the circumstances that surround her. The tranquil life of the home, upon which, in spite of all his sympathy, Ibsen was a little severe in “*Love's Comedy*,” finds its full expression in the character of Agnes; and when, at the end, the breastwork which has been the scene of the combat is swept

away by an avalanche, we are left with a double impression of sweetness and bitterness, of gentleness and of passion. This impression exactly represents the author himself. His nature, fundamentally gentle, is clothed in mail-armor for the hard battle of life, but his heart beats just as warm beneath all this equipment.

"Brand" did not bring the battle to an end. Ibsen appeared full-weaponed with another dramatic poem the following year. "Peer Gynt" stands in the most intimate relation to "Brand." Brand is the antithesis; Peer Gynt is the image itself. In the former, we have the Norwegian nation as it should be; in the latter, as it is. In Brand's description of the nation we have the sketch for Peer Gynt's portrait. It stands complete in these lines: —

"Go but about the land, and when
You listen to all sorts of men,
How each has learned, you soon may see,
A little of everything to be.
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Yet far, as all examples teach,
His faults, his virtues, do not reach;
A fraction he, in small and great,
For good and ill, — a fraction's weight;
And then, alas, and worst of all,
These fractions do not fit at all."

Peer Gynt is the nation itself, presented in a typical figure. All the faults that Ibsen has dis-

cerned are reproduced in him; he is the personification of the incomplete, the characterless, the egotistic. If we do not bear this constantly in mind, we shall find portions of the poem incomprehensible, and be apt to entertain misconceptions. Even Georg Brandes has not escaped such a misconception. He quotes, for example, the song of the yarn-balls: —

“ We are thoughts;
 Thou shouldst have thought us.

 We are a watchword;
 Thou shouldst have proclaimed us.

 We are works;
 Thou shouldst have performed us.”

And he adds: “ Words of reproach, which we may suppose the poet has uttered to spur himself in moments of relaxation, but which we cannot imagine Peer Gynt to have said in self-accusation. How on earth could this miserable Peer ever have proclaimed a watchword, and how could he reproach himself with not having done so!” We need only consider Peer Gynt as the mouthpiece of the nation, and we shall find abundant meaning in the self-accusation, — and this without resorting to any such evasion as the supposition that the words are merely a personal outburst, interpolated by the poet. The scene

upon the coast of Morocco, where Peer Gynt is shown us in company with other national types, no longer seems to us arbitrary when we think of him as typical of his own nationality.

"Peer Gynt" would not, however, have been as complete and vital a work as it is had the author strictly confined himself to the nationally typical. In this work also we find him beginning with an abstraction, and ending with a living individual.

Nor is Peer Gynt the Norwegian in general; he is the Norwegian of a certain period, of the closing years of the romantic epoch. In "Brand" certain of the outworks of romanticism were attacked; we recall, for example, the bailiff's enthusiasm for the times of King Bele; but here the weapon is aimed at the romantic stronghold. Kindred types of the transition period between the days of romanticism and our own may be found in other literatures. Tourguénieff's "Roudine," Spielhagen's "Problematic Characters," Schack's "The Visionaries," and, later, Schandorph's "Centreless," show us characters having this in common with Peer Gynt, that they are visionaries, unable to take a firm hold of actual existence. Ibsen has, however, gone his own way; while the others have found their types among the cultivated classes, he has found his among the people. Peer Gynt is not, like these others, a product of æsthetic roman-

ticism, but rather of that popular and national romanticism which lies at the base of the other. As we know, Ibsen not only took the name of Peer Gynt, but various other details as well, partly from Asbjørnsen and Moe's "Popular Tales," and partly from Asbjørnsen's "Fairy Tales."¹ He especially dwells upon the fact that Peer Gynt's visionary nature is to be accounted for by the tales upon which his mother brought him up. Aase says: —

"We knew nothing better than to forget,
It is hard for one to see things just as they are.
Unpleasant it is to look fate in the eyes;
And so to shake care from us endeavor we all,
And try if we can to keep from thinking at all.
Some make use of brandy, and others of lies,
And we used fairy tales."

To the one who reads "Peer Gynt" in 1888 this comparison of the effects of brandy to those of fairy tales does not appear very formidable, but it was a different matter twenty-one years ago; then it was like a blow in the face of all that was popular and admired in our literature.

Peer Gynt's training has borne fruit. When we make his acquaintance, he is already a visionary, who, instead of bestirring himself, goes about dreaming with eyes wide open. When he tells

¹ An account, correct in the main, of Ibsen's indebtedness to these sources may be found in L. Passarge's "Henrik Ibsen."

about Gudbrand Glesne's ride over Gjendineggen on a reindeer's back, he thoroughly believes it to have been a part of his own experience, although his notions of Gjendineggen are so inexact that it is evident he has never even seen the place. A moment afterwards he falls into a reverie inspired by a wonderful cloud, forgetting gossip and the wedding-guests to dream himself riding upon it as emperor. But when he is finally spurred to action, his motive is one of defiance, the usual motive of weak characters. It is out of defiance that he takes flight with Ingrid, and the action is as unconsidered, as meaningless, and as fantastic as any visionary could desire.

There comes a moment when he realizes that the life of action is better than the life of reflection; it is when he is hunted like a wild beast by the whole village.

“ Storm and tear ! stem the mountain-fall !
Strike ! pull up the fir-tree, roots and all !
This is life ! It can harden a man and raise him,
To hell with the lies that perplex and daze him ! ”

But this exaltation does not last long, and he is soon engrossed in his fancies again, so deeply that he does not know the difference between what he has actually done and what he has only dreamed of doing, but mingles both confusedly together : —

"A lie was the reindeer-ride:
Fancy led me astray.
Nor climbed I the steep with the bride,
Nor drunken was I that day.
Pursued by the mountain troid,
Pecked at by birds of prey,
Jeered at by maidens bold,—
It was all a lie, I say!"

And whenever the serious realities of life confront him, he seeks to evade them in the way that his mother taught him; he takes flight into his visionary world to

"Forget the perverse and awry,
And all that is cruel and harsh."

He always goes around, never across; even by his mother's death-bed he will not look truth in the face, but carries her away with him into the realms of fancy. What a contrast there is between Brand's stern but honest attitude upon the occasion of his mother's death, and the fantastic way in which Peer Gynt smooths with falsehood the passage of his mother from earth. The scene of Aase's death was doubtless meant by Ibsen to stand in contrast with the death of Brand's mother.

The dual existence thus led by Peer Gynt gives to his character a truly romantic indecision; it makes him weak and cowardly, an egotist and a bungler; it places an impassable chasm between

desire and deed, between the will to act and the power to carry out the impulse; his motto is the characteristic:—

“Ay! think it, and wish it, and will it as well,—
But *do* it? No, that is asking too much.”

Everything that Peer Gynt does is done incompletely; he never sets about a resolute action, either good or evil; he destroys with one hand the work of the other, and so is left ineffectual and characterless, and must into the melting-pot, like every one who develops, not into a personality, but into an egotist,—the caricature of the individual,—who has not “been himself,” but merely “sufficient unto himself.” When we read “Peer Gynt,” we think involuntarily of H. C. Oersted’s axiom, “Forget thyself, but lose it not!” Peer Gynt’s character is based upon the reverse of this principle; he has lost his self, but has never forgotten it.

So the figure originally conceived as a national type was gradually transformed into a figure typical merely of that epoch through the closing phase of which Ibsen had lived, and with which he broke forever when he wrote “Brand” and “Peer Gynt.”

There are fewer satiric outbursts in “Peer Gynt” than in “Brand.” In the first three acts we find nothing of the sort, except when a little

sport is made of Norwegian exclusiveness, which is formulated in the patriotic maxim of the Old Man of the Dovre Fjeld: —

“The cow gives cake and the bullock mead,
Whether sweet or sour you should not heed;
From the principal fact let your mind not roam,
It is brewed at home.”

And similar sport is made of the would-be reformers of the Norwegian language when, in the scene of the madhouse at Cairo, Huhu discourses of the language of the orang-utan. The two other madmen who appear upon this occasion are also intended to be taken satirically, but the allusions are so veiled that they will hardly be seen unless pointed out. The fellah with the royal mummy on his back is, — like Trumpeterstraale, — a hit at the Swedes, and the mummy is Charles the Twelfth. The Swedes, like the fellah, are very proud of their “hero-king,” although during the war between Denmark and Germany they gave no evidence of having anything in common with him, — unless it be that they, like the mummy upon this occasion, “remained quite dead.” The minister Hussein, who suffers under the illusion that he is a pen, stands for the whole system of diplomatic notes and protocols, called forth, during the war, from the Kingdom of Sweden and Norway, and especially for a prominent Swedish

statesman, who was very proud of the notes which he wrote during the progress of the war, and who fancied them to have exerted a marked influence over the course of events.

But general poetical and psychological considerations, rather than a definite satirical purpose, were the author's leading motives during the composition of "*Peer Gynt*," so that his hero is not only a characteristic figure from one of the transition periods in the history of this century, but a type having a significance for other countries than those of the North, and it consequently has—in spite of its local color—been understood by foreigners and aroused their admiration. Passarge, for example, who has translated the poem into German, writes of it as follows: "*'Peer Gynt'* is, like every great poem, a picture of man, struggling, erring ever, seeking for deliverance. It ranks with the '*Odyssey*,' the '*Divine Comedy*,' '*Don Quijote*,' and '*Faust*.' . . . '*Peer Gynt*,' despite all its faults, is the poem which bears most distinctly upon its forehead the mark of our age, and the time will come when not only will many commentaries be written upon it, to illuminate it as a whole and in its details,—many of them merely ephemeral allusions,—but when it will be looked upon as a truthful reflection of this century, and again and again attract the admiration of mankind."

After the performance of this magnificent overture the curtain rose in 1869 upon the first comedy of modern life in Norwegian literature. Ibsen had already made an essay in this direction with "Love's Comedy," but his indignation was then too strong, and his visual angle embraced only the controversial, not the comic; he scourged his characters instead of holding them up to ridicule. In "Brand" his indignation had risen still higher, and his pen had been almost wholly devoted to controversy. In "Peer Gynt" the waves began to subside, and when "The Young Men's Union" was written in the winter of 1868-69, his mind had grown so calm that he was free to laugh at the types and conditions that were the objects of his satire.

When Ibsen regarded the political situation at home, after an absence of four years, his impression cannot have been exactly favorable. The relations between the two parties must have seemed easy-going enough; there was not then as wide a gulf as afterwards between Right and Left; there were then no strongly contrasted views of life, but merely different attitudes towards one or two of the political questions upon which people are commonly divided. The division might be sharp at times, but it was not dangerous; it was hardly a question of life and death in the sixties,

as it was in the beginning of the eighties. An outsider might easily have viewed the situation as a squabble between those in power and those who wished to be, and there was nothing in such a squabble to fire a poet like Ibsen ; he must have felt tolerably indifferent as to the outcome, and could have said with Daniel Hejre: " It is all one to me whether the dog eat the pig or the pig the dog." So Ibsen stood in a free and unembarrassed relation to the contrasting conditions which he pictured, and might swing the lash in either direction, as vigorously as he pleased. Lundestad and Chamberlain Bratsberg were spared as little as Stensgaard and land-owner Monsen. The chamberlain was depicted as an old aristocrat, without the slightest comprehension of the age in which he lived, and Lundestad as a crafty rogue, willing to resort to any means that would further his ends without bringing him into conflict with the law. Stensgaard and Monsen were represented as adventurers seeking to rise, — the one a swindler, the other a phrase-monger. Not one of them all is actuated by higher than private interests.

Stensgaard is a typical figure of the sixties ; his language is the jargon of the average liberal politician of that period. The liberal party was then based upon a sort of romantic nationalism ; its speech was a mixture of Johan Sverdrupian

phrases, Björnsonian turns and figures, and Grundtvigian sentiment. Björnson, in particular, had many admirers who attempted to copy his original style; but that which was characteristic and interesting in the model became parody and caricature in the imitation of his not over-brilliant followers. Such an imitator Ibsen pictured in Stensgaard, and he has caught the trick with incomparable accuracy.

Stensgaard has both egotism and vacillation in common with Peer Gynt. "A repulsive home life, a public school education, soul, character, will, endowment, — each resulting in its own peculiar tendency, — how could these diverse influences fail to develop a discordant personality?" says Fjeldbo, speaking of him. His school training has developed in him an impressionable but unfeeling disposition, and given him the power of facile expression. His home life has stunted the growth of his character. The father's tendency to vegetate is responsible for the son's ever unsatisfied desire for enjoyment. The mother's simplicity, and the dishonorable character of her occupation have also left their mark. The pawnbroker's son is entirely without the sense of honor; he has no self-respect, no manly feeling. He has a quick mind, but his intelligence is not developed; he has not learned to know himself; he is governed by

his moods, and has never learned to examine into his own conduct. Self-criticism, in consequence, counts for nothing with him, and he believes in the absolute validity of everything he feels, says, and does. He is carried away by his own words, and is ruled by phrases; in fact, this blind faith in words sums up his whole character. When he conceals his self-interestedness with fine phrases he carries with him all who are as destitute of the critical faculty as he himself, and, blind to his own faults, he fails to perceive his selfishness in its nakedness. It is thus natural that he should feel shocked at the conduct of others, although his own conduct has been quite similar. Remember what he says to Bastian, when the latter speaks of paying court to Madam Rundholmen. He misleads others, because he first of all misleads himself.

And to these characteristics he adds a boundless self-confidence. He worships himself, and seeks to win as high a place in the esteem of others as he has in his own. A true *parvenu*, he is both vain and reckless, respecting nothing except what he calls his aim.

His glibness and his recklessness, his ambition and his self-confidence, his lack of introspective power and his dwarfed moral sense, all make of him a dangerous man, likely to create much dis-

turbance in seeking to attain his ends. But, fortunately, he has two characteristics which make him far less dangerous than he otherwise would be. It is easy to see through him, and he blurts out his views upon all occasions. The art of dissimulation calls for more developed powers of reflection than are his. He is, besides, too self-confident to think that others may possibly not mean what they say, and he believes in their phrases quite as unreservedly as he believes in his own. How should he see through the speech of others, when he cannot even see through his own? This is the standpoint from which we must view him; a fact clearly perceived by Lundestad, who so easily leads him by the nose, and causes him so completely to prostitute himself.

"The Young Men's Union" is a modern comedy of character of high rank; even the minor figures have the stamp of a reality at that time without parallel in our literature. Formally considered, also, "The Young Men's Union" was an epoch-making work. The tone of modern conversation which Ibsen had vainly sought to reproduce in "Love's Comedy," is given here in masterly fashion. The dialogue is not written, it is spoken; there is gossip, twaddle, scolding, and wrangling, just as there is in every-day life. Even the slipshod manner of conversation is copied. When Fjeldbo,

for example, says: "Premiums. Put them to the ear and you will see more distinctly another time," we notice the slip of style at once, but people speak thus in ordinary conversation.

It goes almost without saying that a work like this was bound to be misunderstood by the public; it introduced a new manner into literature, and came so unexpectedly, and as such a surprise, that the proper point of view was generally missed. It represented a new relation to actual life, it took a closer grasp of actuality than any previous work had taken; and since at the same time it dealt with the representatives of political parties, it was thought that Ibsen had portrayed individual politicians, and attempts were made to point out the originals. No one seemed to feel that this mode of procedure tended to degrade a remarkable imaginative work to the level of a political pamphlet. Those who could not agree upon the details were still unanimous in viewing the piece as a partisan document. To ridicule a liberal politician was equivalent to ridiculing liberalism in general. In the first heat of partisan fanaticism the fact was unperceived that the piece lashed both parties alike. A writer in "*Aftenbladet*" said that "the poem was written from a one-sided, partisan standpoint;" and when this notion found currency, it was easy to stand forth as the champion of poetry, and

have at the author in its name. The same writer in "*Aftenbladet*," Kristian Elster, accused Ibsen of having "broken with his own past, of having forsaken that which he had before exalted, of forsaking his ideals and denying the spirit of poetry, of celebrating the triumph of provincialism, and of taking the average man for a model." According to him, Selma's outburst in the third act marked "the only moment in the action when the fresh air is permitted to enter, and when we do not breath the poisonous atmosphere of base passion and diluted morality." Even persons of more consequence fell into the same misconception. At the beginning of Björnson's well-known poem to Johan Sverdrup, there is an express allusion to "The Young Men's Union" in the lines:—

"Because thy mighty name my song
Shall bear, thou yet wert wholly wrong
To think that onslaught it recalls;
I do not mingle in such brawls.
If poesy's sacred grove be made
The assassin's hiding place, if this
The new poetic fashion is,
Then I for one renounce its shade."

By the conservative party the piece was received with more satisfaction, but with no clearer comprehension; the manner in which it treated conservatism was ignored, and the piece was regarded merely as a contribution to the political struggle.

In other words, the party-feeling of the Norwegian public was aroused by "The Young Men's Union." Such excitement rarely passes off quietly, and so, when the piece was produced at the Christiania theatre, it created a violent disturbance. Amid the wild music of hisses and applause, of whistling and "bravo" shouting, the first Norwegian comedy of modern life was ushered upon Norway's leading stage.

On Monday, October 18, 1869, the piece was produced for the first time. A portion of the audience gave expression to its approval, while the rest, by hissing very vigorously, protested against this approval. The battle raged still more fiercely upon the occasion of the second performance, October 20. With the opening words (Lundestad's 17th of May speech) a loud whistling began, which evoked, on the other hand, a zealous demonstration on the part of the author's self-constituted champions. The struggle between hand-clappers and whistlers lasted for several minutes, then the curtain was lowered, and the stage-manager stepped forward, asking the audience if it desired the play to go on, and, in case it did, requesting silence. The play was then uninterruptedly proceeded with as far as Bastian Monsen's lines in the fourth act, about "the people; they who possess nothing and are nothing;

they who lie in bonds." Then the storm burst forth again, and raged intermittently until the fall of the curtain upon the closing act. Not until the lights were turned out did the disturbance cease within the walls of the theatre, and it was kept up for a while outside, in the corridors and even in the street. Upon the third performance, given to a house so closely packed that seats were placed in the space reserved for the orchestra, the battle was renewed; but from the fourth performance onward, peace and order were restored.

Ibsen was then in Egypt, a guest of the Khedive at the opening of the Suez canal. Here he learned of the reception that had been given his play, and has himself expressed indignation that it should have been dragged into the political contentions of the day. The news aroused in him a mood which afterwards found expression in the little poem "At Port Said."

"The Orient sun
O'er the sea was cast;
All the flags of the globe
Streamed from the mast
While the wings of music
The choral bore,
The canal was baptized
'Mid the cannon's roar.

"Past the obelisk
The steamer sped,

While the news in the language
Of home I read,
That my poem-mirror,
Polished for men,
Had been greeted with hisses,
And tarnished again.

“The hornet stung,
And hurt for a space.
Stars, be thanked !
'T is the same old place.
We greeted the frigate,
As past we sailed ;
And, waving my hat,
The flag I hailed.”



V.

REST AND RETROSPECT.

DURING the composition of the three works just discussed, a great change occurred in Ibsen's situation. A long-delayed popularity was at last accorded him in rich measure. "Brand" made him famous at once, one edition after another being demanded; and since, in the house of Gyldendal, he had found more liberal publishers than those who had previously undertaken the issue of his works, his financial condition was greatly improved.

In addition to this, the Storting of 1866 had granted him the "poet's salary," which he had in vain demanded of its predecessor. This was not,

however, granted without some difficulty, for State Councillor Riddervold obstinately opposed it, declaring that he, as the representative of the church, could not approve of a poet's salary for the man who had written "Love's Comedy," and who, in his delineation of Pastor Straamand, had dealt such hard blows to Norwegian ecclesiasticism. A Danish biographer of 1867 relates that Björnson went to the State Councillor, and endeavored to bring him to reason, but unsuccessfully. Then a number of Ibsen's friends took hold of the matter, and were more fortunate. The grant was recommended, and the Storting gave its approval with but four dissenting votes.

When Ibsen left Norway, it had been his intention to return, and his position as artistic adviser of the Christiania theatre was kept open and waiting for him. But, once away from his country, he felt that he could never return to it for good. The "poet's salary" and the large returns from his works placed him in a position to remain abroad, but in 1868 he left Rome for Dresden. In the summer of 1869 he made a visit to Stockholm, and in the following summer to Copenhagen; in both cities he was received with the greatest respect, and even in Norway public opinion sang to a new tune. When, in 1874, after ten years of absence, he made a visit to his former home, he

was received with no end of ovations. The students organized a procession and marched to his dwelling, while his presence in the theatre, at a performance of "The Young Men's Union," was the occasion of vociferous applause from a crowded house. He had at last won the recognition that was due him.

Under these altered conditions he felt the need of settling up his literary accounts. After sending home "Brand," "Peer Gynt," and "The Young Men's Union," one after the other, there supervenes in his life a period given to rest and retrospect. He is no longer busied with new works, but with the revision of the old ones. "Emperor and Galilean," the one new work published during these years, is but the completion of a sketch that had occupied him in the period immediately following upon his arrival in Rome. Then he is busy recasting the works written before. The Norwegian editions of his earlier works had become gradually exhausted, and he was now called upon to decide what portions of those works should be introduced to the large audience he had won. His severe self-criticism naturally had much to say upon this occasion. Three of his youthful dramatic works and a considerable number of poems were not republished at all; "The Feast at Solhaug" was withheld for a number of years, while "Catilina" and

"Fru Inger of Oestraat" underwent a fundamental transformation.

The double drama of "Emperor and Galilean" is Ibsen's most extensive work; even the two parts taken separately are among his most voluminous productions. "Cæsar's Apostasy" is as long as "The Pretenders," and "Emperor Julian" of about the length of "Brand." The original plan of the work probably contemplated a general historical drama having Julian as its principal character, but the plan gradually grew in dimensions, especially after the work was seriously resumed in 1872; strata of new material were superimposed upon the old ones; new aspects of the question and new poetical ideas asserted themselves; and so the work gradually grew into its present colossal proportions. At some future time it will be interesting to investigate the structure of this work, to separate the various layers, indicate the original substratum, and follow the scheme of the drama in its growth.

"Emperor and Galilean" has an interesting position among Ibsen's works. It is the last of his historical dramas, and stands, in its final form, with all its mysticism, midway between two such delineations of modern life as "The Young Men's Union" and "The Pillars of Society." And it has still greater interest as marking a stage in the development of Ibsen's view of life.

As I have already pointed out, Ibsen's earlier historical dramas — with one or two minor exceptions — touch upon "calling." In the last of them, "The Pretenders," vocation or non-vocation was the central theme of the action. In that play, one's calling was treated as a gift from above, falling upon the elect as the apple fell into Aladdin's turban. In "Brand" the conception was different, but no less mystical; there it was a sort of categorical imperative, guiding mankind from on high, — it was theirs to be as "the tablet upon which God may write." In "Peer Gynt," one's calling was declared that of "being one's self," but this was a more mystical conception than one might suppose, and was explained as being the obligation "to bear the Master's purpose as a sign." One might be himself in two ways, as a coat may be "right side or wrong side out": —

"You know, they have lately discovered in Paris
How portraits to make with the aid of the sun.
They can either the image directly give,
Or else the so-called negative.
In the latter are shadow and light reversed,
And wholly unlike they appear at first;
But in them the likeness does really inhere,
And it only needs to be made to appear."

This latter thought appears in a new light in "Emperor and Galilean," where it has assumed a fatalist character. The calling is here neither

a gift nor a categorical imperative; it is a necessity; the word is no longer "thou shalt," but "thou must." "To will is to be under the necessity of willing."

Julian's calling is to establish the kingdom, and the kingdom to be established by him is that of the Galilean; for this the World-Will has marked him out, and thus he is in bonds to necessity. But he may establish this kingdom either positively or negatively; as a child he has already displayed a singular faculty for winning hearts to the Galileans; by the graves of the martyrs he has spoken to the youth of his own age, and converted them to Christianity. But later he mistakes his calling; he conceives of the kingdom as a temporal empire, not as the spiritual realm of the Galileans, and so he becomes engaged in a life and death struggle with the very kingdom which it is his to establish. Nevertheless the task is to be accomplished by his agency. The very oppressions and persecutions that fall upon the Christians arouse them from the apathy and sloth into which they have fallen; even the weak and the infirm take courage to confess Christ and suffer for his faith; and when at last Julian falls, he has accomplished his appointed task in the establishment of Christianity, since, where apathy and dissension formerly ruled, he now

leaves behind him a powerful and united body of believers. There is, as we may see, both mysticism and fatalism in this conception of calling; and the development of the idea is, in a manner, completed, for no return can be made from the point of fatalism, while mysticism must disappear to make place for the purely natural conception of calling. In the work of Ibsen immediately preceding, it had indeed disappeared, which provides new evidence of the fact that "Emperor and Galilean" dates, in its original idea, from an earlier period. In "The Young Men's Union," the mystical idea of calling appears as a mere phrase. Stensgaard has no less faith in his calling than Haakon, and is quite as certain of having entered into a pact with Providence. "Thus hath God commanded," he says. "Ay, he, for it is to accomplish his purposes that we go confidently upon our way." That which has previously been sublime, here becomes merely amusing wordiness.

Ibsen's mode of thought places sacrifice in a close relation with calling. The latter demands a willingness to renounce, to sacrifice one's personal inclination. To "be one's self" is, then, in absolute contrast to "being self-sufficient;" it is, indeed, "to slay self." Lordship over self, in renunciation and in sacrifice for the love of others, is man's principal obligation. Ibsen carries this

idea so far as to glorify sacrifice for its own sake. This feeling was very evident in "Brand," and it reappears in "Emperor and Galilean" as a glorification of the sufferings of the martyrs. From the standpoint of modern ethics, the martyr is deserving of admiration only when he sacrifices himself for the good of others; for Ibsen, on the other hand, the elevating and ennobling power of sacrifice is so great that it is valuable on its own account. When the Christians in "Emperor Julian" tear open their wounds with their own hands, or cut their own flesh to cast the pieces at Julian's feet, this is not given as evidence of the desperate deeds to which fanaticism may lead mankind, but as a measure of the depth and force of the enthusiasm that their faith is able to inspire. It is the proof that, at this historical crisis, the faith is vital and has right upon its side; while the view of life for which Julian battles shows itself to be outworn by the very fact that it cannot lead men to martyrdom. The cause for which no one is ready to sacrifice everything is doomed. So "Emperor and Galilean" represents, viewed in this light, one of the highest points to which Ibsen's idealism attains. In his later works, the conception of sacrifice appears in a far more sober and practical form.

Poetically considered, "Emperor and Galilean" does not take the highest rank among Ibsen's works. We feel while reading it that the long period elapsing between the time when it was first planned and the time of its final execution has prevented the material from being properly woven together into a concrete whole. It is noticeable, for example, that Julian is a very different and far more interesting character in "Cæsar's Apostasy" than in "Emperor Julian." We must indeed admit that the characteristics developed in him as emperor are suggested while he is yet a youth and a Cæsar, but it is none the less surprising that his failings become so much more prominent upon his accession to the imperial throne. In "Cæsar's Apostasy" he has the complete sympathy of the reader. His is a fresh nature from the first, honestly seeking after the truth, and striving to lead a full and rich existence, preferring life to books and truth to phrases. He is indeed a trifle vain, and he has early learned to dissimulate, but these characteristics may be forgiven in him on account of the difficulty of his position. Even when he craftily causes himself to be acclaimed as emperor, he does not forfeit our sympathy, for it is done in simple self-defence. As commander in Gaul, he has developed an admirable quickness, energy,

and ability to act; and when he finally separates himself from the Galileans, it is because he can no longer stand the hypocrisy, the dishonesty, and the meanness that he has seen among the Christians.

But in "Emperor Julian" he appears transformed; he who desired life is now satisfied with books; from a man of action he has grown a vain literary pedant, content with the outward shell and never reaching the kernel; so that the citizens of Antioch are quite justified in making sport of him. He no longer bears the tragic stamp, and sinks below his former plane only to rise again at the very end. Like Catiline, Fru Inger, and Hjördis, his tragic fate drives him first to madness and then to death.

As the representative of the great civilization of the ancients we would gladly accord him more significance than Ibsen has; and this remark applies with still greater force to the lesser representatives of ancient culture who figure in the play. Admit that that civilization was outworn; admit that it was falling into decay; even in its decline it was capable of producing nobler characters than Libanios and his compeers. But in this, as in all other cases where Ibsen has dealt with historical transitions from old to new, he is unreservedly on the side of the new. This was

his position both in "The Pretenders" and in the poem written for Norway's millennial celebration, when he glorified the deeds of Harald Haarfager at the expense of the liberty-loving heroes of old.

The style of "Emperor and Galilean" is an interesting attempt to reproduce the character of a definite period in literary form. It is the style of later antiquity, with its circuitousness and its artistic turns, that the author has sought to reproduce; the Latin mainly, although to a certain extent the Greek also, seems to have served him as a model. This style gives a strong historical coloring to the work.

It need hardly be stated that Ibsen's style underwent a marked development, and that his ideals in this matter became modified in the course of years. Three well-defined stages of this development may be pointed out.

In his youthful poetry the style is determined by feeling. Then follows a period, beginning with "The Chieftains," during which he endeavored to impress the stamp of nationality strongly upon his style. A trifling anecdote throws some light upon this period. At a sort of charity fair in Christiania a series of tableaux were to be given, accompanied by recitations. Ibsen was called upon to write one of these poems, and Wilhelm Wiehe to recite

it. When it came to the point, Wiehe declared that it was impossible for him to recite the text that Ibsen had furnished; its language was too distinctly Norwegian to be spoken by a Danish actor in the presence of a Norwegian audience. Even Fru Gundersen — who was then Fröken Svendsen — declared that she found it difficult to recite the poem. She had been trained upon the Danish stage at the capital, and this environment had given her language a character which made Ibsen's ultra-Norwegian speech strange to her. Perspicuity is the characteristic of Ibsen's style in the third period of its development, and it was with this in view that he went to work, in the first half of the seventies, to revise his early writings. He found the emotional style of his youth too vague and general, and his revision consisted partly in adding force to it by concentration and condensation, partly in brightening it with new and picturesque words and images, in place of the vague ones previously used.

In "Catilina," which was published as a sort of jubilee volume twenty-five years after the appearance of the first edition, few verses have been left without alteration. Since examples are more instructive than general observations, I will here give the original form of some of the passages previously quoted from the second edition. The

passage in which Catiline declares his object to be the furtherance of civil liberty (page 42), stood originally as follows: —

“For freedom, freedom ’t is that I would shape,
As pure as in a vanished past it once
Did blossom here, — I would call back again
The time when every Roman with his life
Was glad to buy the fatherland’s renown,
And offered all, its splendor to protect.”

What Catiline says of shining like a fallen star (page 44), has the following form in the first edition: —

“No — for a single moment to shine out —
And brightly flaming as a meteor,
With but one noble deed to consecrate
My name to fame, to immortality,
Ha ! then could I in that selfsame hour
Take leave of life, — for then I should have lived ;
I could take flight unto an unknown shore,
I could the dagger plunge into my heart.”

And Furia’s outburst (page 48) appears in these words: —

“How empty is this uneventful life,
Dim as the flame of an expiring torch !
Ha ! what a field it is for all the wealth
Of high, proud plans that swell within my breast,
And are contracted here within these walls,
Where life grows set, and hope dies slowly out,
Where drowsily the day sinks to its end,
And nothing worthy of my thought appears.”

As we see, both metrical form and style have been remodelled and more firmly knit.

"Fru Inger of Oestraat," the second edition of which had appeared the year before, offers further interesting examples of the difference between the works of Ibsen's youth and the style of his ripened manhood. Many extracts are not needed for the illustration of this difference.

Eline, spying upon her mother's nocturnal wanderings in the knight's hall, sits down with Björn and bids him tell her a fairy-tale. He begins in a voice loud enough to attract attention, and she exclaims: —

"Hush, do not shout thus; I am not deaf! A fairy-tale should not be bawled out like some scandalous rumor, faring over shore and sea; no, it should be whispered quietly — (*looking toward the door of the hall*) — as quietly as a ghost walks at midnight."

Ibsen has seen that here was something superfluous, weakening the effect, and has struck out the whole of the closing period. Only the first sentence is left, in all its effective brevity. And to give an example of his revision in small matters I take at random a passage from one of Eline's speeches in the conversation that follows between her and her mother: —

"As you I pictured to myself those women of whom the old chronicles relate, — those women who came forward in the day of danger, and aroused the people to mighty deeds. It seemed to me as if the Lord God himself had impressed a stamp upon your forehead, and marked you out as she who should be a leader to the many thousands who surrounded you. In the high hall knights and pages sang your praises, and about the land the peasant called you Norway's hope and pillar."

(1st edition.)

"Like you I pictured to myself those women of whom we may read in the chronicles and battle-books.

"It seemed to me as if the Lord God himself had set his sign upon your forehead, and marked you out as she who should lead the timorous and the irresolute. In the high hall knights and chieftains sang your praises, and even the common people, near and far, called you the land's hope and pillar."

(2d edition.)

The fewest changes are made in Eline's famous scene with Nils Lykke and in Fru Inger's monologue in the fifth act. The greatest changes are made in Nils Lykke's speeches. The long monologue, in particular, with which he introduces himself to the reader in the second act, has been cut down to about half its original length, both character and play gaining greatly by the reduction. At thought of Lucia's death he says, for example, in the first edition: —

"Flowers fade early here in the North! A maiden is injured, receives a shock, and so it is over, once for all. I would gladly know whether it is from shame and anger at the loss of what is called honor, or from sorrow and grief that the man to whom she has given herself up proves treacherous. In either case she is a fool, and one fool more or less in the world, that — (*After a pause,*

smiling) Hm, the springtime of my young life has been rich enough; every year have I seen a rose run to seed in the spring, and a lily fade in the autumn."

All this is omitted, and we have instead only the words: "Flowers are crushed, flowers fade," murmured, half smiling, by Nils Lykke. The author has been almost as summary in his treatment of Nils Lykke's description of Eline, further on in the monologue. Even so characteristic a bit as the following, "The best part of love is remembrance, and I — have many memories," has been sacrificed as superfluous.

Ibsen has treated his lyrical poems still more radically. When we look at the little volume of "Poems" published by him, we are apt to think that his lyrical productivity has been very slight. Yet he wrote and published, in his younger days, so many poems that, if all were included, they would make several collections of the size of the one revised by him. His self-criticism has been more busily at work here than anywhere else.

As early as 1850 or 1851, he thought of publishing a collection of poems, and the plan was so far carried into execution that the first sheet was printed; then he thought better of it, and the publication was postponed from one year to another. When the matter was seriously taken up again his criticism was so severe that of his entire lyric out-

put only fifty-five poems were found worthy to be included. Of the long poem called, in "The Man," "A Saturday Evening at Hardanger," only the brief intermezzo was preserved which now opens the collection under the title of "Fiddlers," and this was reduced from nine to four short stanzas. "In the Picture-Gallery," the poetic cyclüs already mentioned, which consisted of twenty-three poems, was condensed into the little poem "In the Gallery," while of the separate poems of the cyclüs only "Fear of Light" was preserved intact, one or two other bits being utilized in the construction of some short new poems. In "At Akershus," four stanzas were cut out, and six new ones supplied; "Building Plans" was reduced from five stanzas to three; "The Eider Duck" from sixteen to seven, etc. These examples show how summarily the poet dealt with his work.

And when we examine the revision in detail, our impression of the exacting nature of his self-criticism and of the difference between his later and earlier styles will not be diminished. Take, for example, the first verses of "At Akershus." In their original form, they read as follows: —

"The summer night has spread its soft veil over the earth; fog-dimmed stars shine soft and silver-pale through the mist."¹

¹ It is impossible to make of this an English rhymed stanza without missing the point that the author wishes to make. — TR.

'These fog-dimmed stars, shining soft and silver-pale through the mist, do not please Ibsen when he comes upon them in the work of revision; the words paint neither the fog nor the solitary stars which shine through it in the summer-night heaven; so, after having made a slight change in the first lines, he rewrites the last lines, giving to the verses this form: —

"The summer night's veil with soft folds spans the earth; solitary stars, great and quiet, burn pale through the haze."

This verse so pictures the hazy summer night that the reader sees it before his eyes. And Ibsen's practice in this case has been his practice throughout. All the words which belong to an older poetic terminology, and which are, in consequence, a little worn, he replaces by new expressions, that are more picturesque in effect, because nearer to actuality. The "wave" is replaced by the "fjord;" the "cliff" by the "mountain-wall;" my "room" by my "nest;" to "make one's way" becomes to "break one's way;" to "dazzle" becomes to "blind;" to "step" (as on a stairway) becomes to "mount;" to "slip" (along) is replaced by "proceed" (on land) or by "steer" (at sea); "then" is sometimes changed to "at that time," and sometimes particularized as "that evening;" "bright" gold becomes "red" gold,

and a word like "dark" is sometimes altered to "red," sometimes to "gloomy" ("the red glow in the eye," "the midnight gloomy shaft;" in both cases the word was originally "dark").¹

As a rule the alterations are matters of style, but there are a few cases in which changes of a more serious character have been made. "Fear of Light" now ends with the following stanza:—

"When the outposts of day I am nearing
Are my wits in a sorry plight;
If some great deed 't is mine to accomplish,
It must be a deed of night."

This was added during the process of revision. As published in "The Illustrated Newspaper," the poem ends with the stanza just preceding this. The alteration made in "The Eider Duck" is very characteristic. At first the eider duck was for Ibsen merely an image of perseverance and faithfulness. Man was far less faithful and persevering, for,—

"Once bereft of the treasure thus hidden from sight,
His soul is wrapped in eternal night;
His strength is sapped and his spirits depressed,
And nothing remains but his bleeding breast."

All this disappears in the process of revision,

¹ It is painfully evident that no translation can accurately convey the author's meaning in this and the accompanying paragraphs, but it has been thought better to reproduce them as well as possible than to leave them out altogether.—TR.

and the eider duck is made to serve as an image of the poet's own experience.

"If his treasure a third time is taken, 't is said,
On some night of spring his wings are spread,
And he cleaves the mist with his bleeding breast,
On some sunnier Southern shore to nest."

No less characteristic are the changes made in "Building Plans." Of the greater and the lesser aim — that of becoming an immortal poet, and that of possessing a woman's love — he originally wrote thus: —

"At first I thought the plan possessed a noble harmony;
But later on discordant the whole thing seemed to me,
And when I grew to reason's age it would not do at all;
The great aim seemed so little; the lesser aim was all."

The last two lines are given as follows in the revised editions: —

"The builder grown to reason's age, the castle would not do;
The great wing was too little; the lesser wing fell through."

Such alterations as these testify to the various experiences which united to give Ibsen a darker view of life, and which embittered his disposition as the years flowed by.

And poems like "The Might of Memory," and "The Grounds of Faith," written just after he went abroad, reproduce his feeling towards Norway with an intensified energy of expression. Such verses as the former may serve as a poetical



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illustration of the declaration made in Rome that he would never return.

Yet he came to feel, after some time had elapsed, that he must see his home once more. The first edition of his poems had these closing lines : —

“To the huts of the snowlands
Every night of the year,
From these sunlit lowlands
Speeds a cavalier.”

and when in the following year, he sent home his great poem, “For the Millennial Festival,” it began with the following greeting of reconciliation : —

“My countrymen, who made for me to flow
That tonic draught, bitter, but strong to save,
That gave the poet, standing by his grave,
New strength to fight beneath the sun’s fierce glow ;
Who then to me the staff of exile gave,
Of fear the sandals, and the pack of woe ;
Who sent me with such outfit forth to roam,
Here from the world I send this greeting home.

“I send, and thank you for the griefs that harden
And cleanse the soul with flow of bitter tears ;
For all the flowers that bloom in life’s rich garden
Are firmly rooted in those bygone years ;
That here in full luxuriant life they grow
To chilling blasts sent from afar they owe ;
Mist-nurtured, in the sun they here expand,
For these best gifts I thank my native land.”

Nevertheless, he felt uneasy and doubtful when, after ten years of absence, he finally determined to revisit his country; he confessed as much as

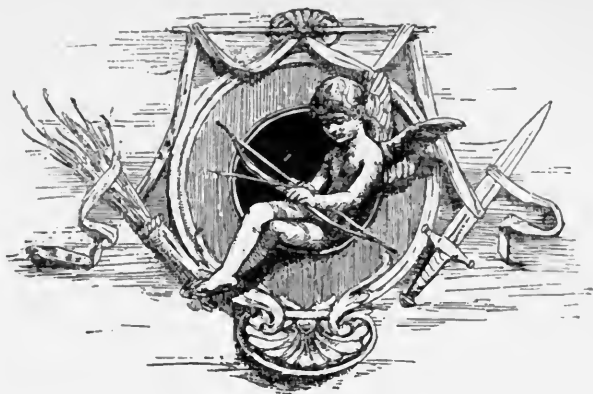
this in his address to the students. The cordial reception with which his books had met did not set his mind at rest; he was still agitated by the question, "How do I stand personally with my fellow-countrymen?" The question was answered by the enthusiasm of his reception.

Yet it was hardly the desire to have this question answered that brought him home; it was rather the feeling that he had reached a turning-point in his poetic development. The step taken with "The Young Men's Union" was but the first step in a new path.

The period of historical tragedy and of controversial poetry was past for him; the drama of modern life was about to absorb his attention. And that he might paint a vital picture of modern life, he felt that he must once more tread Norwegian earth and breathe Norwegian air. His relations to actuality were such that a protracted stay at home was not necessary; a brief sojourn would suffice. So he withdrew once more into his exile, and keeping, by the study of books and newspapers, a sharp eye upon home affairs, he began the series of modern dramas whose production has characterized the last ten years of his creative activity, and which have given him European fame.

These works lie so near to our age that they may hardly be now examined from the historical

standpoint, and to form a general critical estimate of them does not come within my present purpose. So I will be content with a solution of one aspect of the problem which I have set myself, with pointing out their leading motives, and characterizing their artistic stamp.



VI.

DRAMAS OF MODERN LIFE.

THE great historical happenings that closed the period of the sixties and opened that of the seventies fixed Ibsen's attention in the most marked degree. During the war between Denmark and Germany he had observed, in European politics, that contradiction between word and deed which it gradually became a passion for him to trace out.

“With forgotten vows, with deceitful words,
With treaties torn and repealed,
With oaths of yesterday broken to-day,
You have fertilized history's field,”

he exclaimed to the statesmen of Europe. He came to believe that the age he lived in was an

outworn age, and that a new one must be at hand; and in this connection he instituted comparisons with other critical periods of European civilization, and with the general dissolution which preceded the rise of a new order of things in the later Roman empire, — with the period when every thing was falling into ruins; when

“ the castle-wall,
The circus, the temple with roof
Fallen in, the arch, the colonnade, — all
Were crushed by the buffalo's hoof.
So the future was reared upon this dearth
Of the past, and pure was the air.
And now there are signs of a nobler birth,
Now pestilent fogs from the marshy earth
Rise up, and drift here and there.”¹

Or he likened the age to that of the decline of ancient Egypt. In both cases a lack of individuality was the cause; for, as he says in “The Balloon Letter,”

“ When the will no longer thrones,
When the body is not torn
By joy exultant, hate, and scorn,
Beat of pulse and blood's hot flow, —
Then is all the splendid show
But a rattling of dry bones.”

At the time of the war between France and Germany Ibsen seems to have foreseen a new and epoch-making crisis, — a new age close at hand. In

¹ From the poem entitled “ Abraham Lincoln's Murder ”

"The Balloon Letter," written in December, 1870, he makes definite reference to such a new age:

"Lady, shall we to the feast?
For the carrier dove when least
We expect, may bring the card."

And in a letter of the same month, written to Georg Brandes, this prophecy finds energetic expression in prose.

"The events of the day largely occupy my thoughts," he writes. "The old illusory France has gone to pieces; when the new actual Prussia likewise shall go to pieces, we shall advance with a leap into the coming age. Hej! How ideas will tumble about us! And it will be high time, in truth. For up to date we have been but living upon the crumbs from the revolutionary table of the last century, and that food has been long enough chewed and re-chewed. Our concepts call for new meanings and new explanations. Liberty, equality, and fraternity are no longer what they were in the days of the guillotine, of blessed memory. This is just what the politicians will not understand, and for that reason I hate them. Men still call for special revolutions — for revolutions in politics, in externals. But all that sort of thing is trumpery. It is the human soul that must revolt."

What Ibsen awaited of the new age was a condi-

tion of things favorable to the free development of individuality, unchecked by state or society. In another letter to Georg Brandes, written a month or two later, we read: "The state is the curse of the individual. How has the strength of Prussia been bought? By the sacrifice of the individual to the political and geographical idea. The *Kellner* is the best soldier. The state must away! That revolution shall find me on its side. Undermine the conception of the state; proclaim free will and spiritual kinship as the leading elements in the final settlement, and we shall be on the way to a freedom that will be worth something." This thought, that the state is the foe of individuality, and must, in consequence, away, is one of Ibsen's pet ideas. Sixteen years after this letter was written, I heard him develop the same idea with the same zealous warmth. This idea is characteristic of our age, and may come to play a great part in the future. Even so zealous a defender of the idea of the state as Herbert Spencer, admits, in one of his essays, that we are tending toward a form of government in which "direction will be reduced to a minimum, and freedom raised to a maximum." In fact, as Brandes points out, the ideas shortly afterward proclaimed by the Paris commune were allied to those of Ibsen's letter. Ibsen himself felt this kinship of idea; in a letter written to Brandes some

time later he laments that the commune has gone and spoiled his "excellent theory of the state, or rather of the no-state." "The idea will now be powerless for a long while, and I cannot even advocate it in verse without impropriety. And yet I see clearly that it had a sound kernel, and that it will one day be put into effect without being caricatured."

The Paris commune, and the reaction that followed upon it, disappointed Henrik Ibsen. Like Maximos, in "Emperor and Galilean," he had thought "the third kingdom" to be at hand, and, like Maximos, also, he was forced to admit his error, and to realize that the time was not yet come. Personal impressions like these are doubtless responsible for the peculiar way in which the character of the mystic is delineated.

As long as he believed the new order of things to be at hand, he preserved an attitude of dignified expectancy.

"Until *then* I live expectant,
Wear kid gloves about the house ;
Till *then* while away the hours,
And on parchment poems indite."

But as soon as he perceived that "Europe's steam-packet," although on its course to new shores, had on board the body of the past, — which would long remain there, seeing that the voyage was far from nearing its end, — he abandoned the

expectant attitude, and began to diagnose the diseases of modern society. The result of these efforts lies before us in the series of social dramas which begins with "The Pillars of Society," and ends, for the present, with "Rosmersholm."¹

The notorious Russian scientist and anarchist, Prince Kropotkin, in an article in "The Nineteenth Century,"² has recently characterized modern social hypocrisy in the following words: "Our principles of morality say: 'Love your neighbor as yourself;' but let a child follow this principle and take off his coat to give it to the shivering pauper, and his mother will tell him that he must never understand the moral principles in their right sense. If he lives according to them, he will go barefoot, without alleviating the misery round about him. Morality is good on the lips, not in deeds. Our preachers say, 'Who works, prays,' and everybody endeavors to make others work for himself. They say, 'Never lie,' and politics is a big lie. And we accustom ourselves and our children to live under this double-faced morality, which is hypocrisy, and to conciliate our double-facedness by sophistry. Hypocrisy

¹ "The Lady from the Sea" (1888), Ibsen's latest work up to the present date, did not appear in time to be included in this biography. — *T*7.

² February, 1887.

and sophistry become the very basis of our life. But society cannot live under such a morality. It cannot last so ; it must, it will be changed."

A wholly similar conception of modern society lies at the basis of Ibsen's dramas of modern life, and it is with this modern social hypocrisy that he deals. He no longer takes up bunglers like Peer Gynt, and adventurers like Stensgaard, but rather typical specimens of social man. He makes so many concessions to them, and endows them with so many excellent qualities, that public opinion would regard them as wholly worthy and honorable men, and then he tears from them their conventional tatters, leaving their brutal egotism to appear in all its nakedness.

Consul Bernick is the first of the lot; he is the most respected and conspicuous man of the town, — a business-man of the utmost importance, a man who takes the lead in all projects for the general welfare, the liberal-handed benefactor of his native place, one of society's stoutest pillars. Yet egotism lurks behind all his actions; if he bestows gifts upon the town, it is to win power and consideration; and when he espouses the cause of the railway, it is because he will profit by its construction. But he dare not carry out his plans in an honest and straightforward manner because of his environment. Society demands

that magnificent phrases be used, and so he and everybody else adorn their small acts with magnificent phrases.

There is, moreover, a special sort of social hypocrisy in Norway which Ibsen took this occasion to show up. It is a sort of hypocrisy that was in full flower at the time when this piece was written.

The great European happenings had not made upon the Norwegian public the impression that they had made upon Henrik Ibsen. We were rather terrified by them than otherwise. We had read in the newspapers reports of the horrors of the Paris commune, and mysterious suggestions of a secret society, calling itself the "International," whose object was to consign the whole of modern civilization to the flames. And at the same time we read of diverging currents of thought in the world outside, and learned that some of the worst of them were flowing in our direction. But here, fortunately, they would gain no currency; there was peace here and no danger, for our little society was based, thank God, upon safer moral foundations than the great societies abroad. These great societies were generally regarded as falling into hopeless decay; ours, on the contrary, was still in sound condition, and it behooved us to preserve it thus by firmly intrenching ourselves, and

establishing a sort of spiritual quarantine for all modern ideas. Our own moral superiority was at that time one of the special Norwegian articles of faith, as is always the case with small countries that have for a long period been shut off from outside agitations for the promotion of a higher degree of civilization.

It is against this local social hypocrisy that Ibsen especially takes his stand in "The Pillars of Society." His opinion is that the main difference between large and small communities is to be found in the fact that there is more lying and thieving in the latter than in the former. The smaller the community the more numerous the considerations weighing with the individual, the more personal initiative is crippled, and the fewer great things are achieved, while social morality still serves to cover the same vice and crimes. Bernick, who is at first so indignant at American ship-owners for sending unsafe ships to sea, is finally driven, for the very purpose of preserving his own social position, to become guilty of the same crime.

When the play appeared, it was natural that the hypocrisy attacked by the author should be prompt to protest. The critics asserted that the picture drawn by Ibsen was not a likeness, that our society was not what he, off in Munich, had imagined it to



HENRIK IBSEN.

be, and that it was in reality better and more honorable than larger societies. During the ten years that have elapsed since then, the logic of events has decided so irrevocably between author and critic that the sort of hypocrisy in question no longer dares lift its head.

In "The Pillars of Society" we saw the citizen from the social point of view, but in Consul Bernick's relation to his wife there was already offered a suggestion of the citizen as married man. This suggestion was carried out in "A Doll Home." In this case also, the author makes a great number of concessions to the person whose egotism is to be disclosed. Lawyer Helmer is a man who would be taken as an ornament to society; he is propriety itself in all that is external, a person of æsthetic inclination and developed taste; he has the strongest possible antipathy to everything that is false and dishonorable; and his conception of financial solvency is so strict that he will not accept a loan, merely because he might die the next day, and thus be prevented from meeting the obligation. In these respects the author has made him a better man than the majority are. But how brutal is the selfishness concealed beneath this fair surface! How rough and selfish he is in his relations with his wife, not only when he makes the terrible discovery of her forgery, but before that, in their

daily life! She is to live for his sake only, to have no other thought than of him, no feelings, no opinions, save those which are his.

No other of Ibsen's plays has aroused such persistent and varied discussion as "*A Doll Home*;" it actually gave rise, in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, to a whole literature of comment, favorable and unfavorable. In the latter country it even gave the impulse to a dramatic school, which, taking Ibsen's play for a model, dealt with allied subjects,—often, it must be said, in a manner a little suggestive of caricature.

That which gives "*A Doll Home*" so conspicuous a place among Ibsen's works is the circumstance that here, for the first time, the author extends his old principle of individuality to embrace women as well as men. Women also shall be themselves, be human beings, and not merely their husbands' wives, and their children's mothers.

"Thou art, first and foremost, wife and mother," says Helmer.

"That I no longer believe," replies Nora. "I believe that I am, first and foremost, a human being; I, as well as thou — or, in any case, that I should endeavor to become one."

Ibsen had not previously embraced woman in this view; he had created a few strong-willed exceptions, but never before had he represented

woman as completely carried away by enthusiasm for manly activity; her great and admirable trait of character was that of being ready to sacrifice all for the man whom she loved. So was represented Aurelia in "Catilina," so Eline in "Fru Inger," Margrethe, Fru Ragnhild, and Ingebjörg in "The Pretenders," Agnes in "Brand," Solvejg in "Peer Gynt," and Fru Bernick, Fröken Bernick, and Lona Hessel in "The Pillars of Society." Even Hjördis might have been such a woman, had she married Sigurd rather than Gunnar. And if the sacrifice was not made for their husbands, it was for their sons. What, besides her son, is the red thread in Fru Inger's life? What is it but affection for her son that makes of Aase, in spite of everything, a sympathetic character? And what to us is Inga of Varteig, save mother to "the king, her mighty son"? Love is the essential trait of woman's character, — the love which is ready to sacrifice every thing without hope of reward. So we read, in the first edition of "The Pretenders," this genuinely Ibsenese aphorism: "To love, to sacrifice all, and to forget, — that is the saga of womankind." And so Ibsen always pictured woman in a radiant, poetic light, contrasting her with self-loving man; so all the lyrical impulse, all the fulness of repressed feeling, which he could make no use of in his presentation of man, he lays as a halo around the

brow of woman. To the delineation of such women are devoted the gentlest and most affecting portions of his work. Nothing can be more delicate and graceful than Eline's or Margrethe's love, nothing deeper or warmer than those scenes in the fourth act of "Brand" where the thought of Agnes dwells upon her dead child. Thus we see that Ibsen, more than any other poet, is the champion of woman, and if he does not wholly agree with Bernick, he is not far from doing so when the latter exclaims: "You women are the pillars of society."

But his fundamental principle was bound, in the course of time, to make him apply to women the same measure of individuality that he applied to men, and when that point was reached, he could no longer regard the faculty of merging herself in the being of another as her highest. As the diametrical opposite of egoism this faculty was sure of his sympathy; but to be one's self was not alone to "die to one's self," and, great as came to be his admiration for altruism, he could not wholly forget the demands of individuality.

It has been suggested, and rightfully, that the germ of "A Doll Home" may be found in Selma's outburst in the fourth act of "The Young Men's Union," but the first germ of the idea dates further back. In one of the scenes which

represent Peer Gynt paying court to Anitra, he says: —

“I would have thee for my pleasure,
Of my love the arbitress,
I would have thee mine alone ;
I would be to thee a treasure
Rich as gold or precious stone.
Should we part, then life would be
Nota bene, worthless grown,
And for thee especially.
Every inch of thee I'd see

Devoted utterly to me.
'T is a fine thing, on the whole,
That so empty is thy head ;
Of thyself, hadst thou a soul,
Thou might'st think at times instead.
I have hit on just the thing, —
Yes, believe me, thou shalt go
With thine ankle in a ring, —
For us both 't is best 't were so ;
I will be thy soul, thy king ;
For the rest, — the *status quo*.”

These lines provide a sketch for Helmer's portrait, and also — as the postulate of their satire — they embody the view that led Ibsen, in “A Doll Home,” to extend to woman the principle of individuality.

But in accordance with Ibsen's general conception of woman, this principle is presented in the shape of an earnest appeal, not in that of a bitter reproach for unfulfilled obligations.

Nora, from the very start, is one of Ibsen's characteristic delineations of woman in the old

manner; she has, like her predecessors, an unlimited readiness to sacrifice herself. She does not hesitate at forgery to spare her father and save her husband's life, and she feels convinced that the action is a praiseworthy one. When she is told that such an action is looked upon as criminal, she cannot believe it; and even when convinced that such is the case, she would still be willing to repeat the offence if the situation seemed to make it desirable. When Helmer says, "No one sacrifices honor for love," she stands as the spokesman for all of Ibsen's women, as well as for his own conception of her sex, when she exclaims, "A hundred thousand women have done it." When August Strindberg, in the preface to the first part of "Married," takes the poet to task for this reply, characterizing it as a sort of chivalric phrase, he simply shows that he does not understand one of the most marked characteristics of Ibsen's work.

But such unlimited devotion is dangerous to individuality, especially in marriage with a man like Helmer. In such a marriage Nora cannot become a human being; she remains, and must remain, a mere doll. For Helmer's ideal of a wife is much like Peer Gynt's ideal of a mistress: just as Peer Gynt would be Anitra's soul, so Helmer would be both Nora's will and con-

science. She lives in a sort of minority, thinks as a child, and allows herself to be treated as a child. As long as she regards her husband with boundless admiration, and trusts in him unconditionally, things go on fairly well; but the day when trust and admiration collapse, the day when she realizes what sort of man he is for whom she has sacrificed so much, that day brings her life to a crisis,—she is then forced to choose between absolute self-renunciation and self-assertion. As we know, Ibsen makes her choose the latter, represents her as breaking the degrading bonds put upon her by this marriage, just as he had represented his earlier ideal figures as breaking the bonds put upon them by society. Having previously pointed out the dangers to individuality inherent in the constitution of society, he now points out the dangers inherent in marriage, and ends with a wholesale condemnation of that class of marriages in which the husband is everything and the wife nothing.

The conclusion of "A Doll Home" brought out much adverse criticism. It was, with much diversity of view, condemned; and the general result of this adverse criticism was to characterize it as immoral.

Ibsen naturally viewed the question in a very different light; for him it would have been abso-

lutely immoral to continue a life in common under such conditions. "Yes, but the children?" it was asked, "what is to become of them? A mother cannot be approved of for leaving her children too." "Yes, the children, yes,—do you think perchance that the children will be better off for the continuance of such a marriage?" Ibsen replied, and then put a new question.

The new question was "Ghosts."

As everybody knows, "Ghosts" and "A Doll Home" stand in a sort of complementary relation one to another.

Suppose Nora to have returned the day after forsaking her husband's roof; suppose that husband to have been not only crude and narrow in thought, but also licentious and vulgar in life; suppose them to have had no children until after her return,—and there you have the differences between Helene Alving and Nora Helmer. The last two of these conditions make the discussion of the morality of divorce far less fundamental than in "A Doll Home," but the attack which the play makes upon prevalent opinions is all the more powerful.

Helene Alving, like Nora, leaves her husband, and he, like Helmer, is made unhappy by her desertion. She takes refuge with Pastor Manders, but this typical spokesman of public opinion per-



VENSTOB FARM, NEAR SKIEN.

suades her to return to the debauched, and both bodily and spiritually ruined Alving, who there-upon continues in his old ways as if nothing had occurred. What will now happen? The answer given is about this: Her feeling of independence has become enfeebled by her abortive attempt to escape, and she no longer dares act in accordance with her views of right and wrong, fearing, should she do so, to come into conflict with what the public thinks and says. And, seeing that this public will blame her for the irregularities of her husband, should they come to light, she does everything possible to hide his life from the eyes of the world. She becomes a sacrifice to the general hypocrisy. She sends away the son who is born to her, as soon as he is old enough to be able to understand the true state of things. An early insight into his surroundings would prove disastrous, and so he must go away, however painful and harmful it may be. This is the advantage that the child derives from the continuance of such a union, — not a very great one. Alving goes on in his licentious ways, and she, in trembling and fear, strives to preserve his fame untarnished; for every spot upon his fame will leave two upon hers. Even after his death she continues to watch over his reputation by concealing the story of his irregularities and glorifying his memory. For this reason she erects the asylum.

But during all this toil in the servile fear of society, there grows within her a feeling of revolt against this society of which she is the slave; her thought gradually analyzes those relations which society looks upon as noble and holy in themselves, but which she has come to know only in paltry and distorted shapes. The relations between husband and wife, between brother and sister, between father and son, appear to her mind developed through bitter experience, as mere empty forms, as fine phrases that at some time became invested with a sort of halo, and have since preserved their glamour by virtue of that human infirmity, illustrated by Andersen in his story of "The Emperor's New Clothes." And then comes the son, and his life makes clear the relation between mother and son, the only relation that has as yet escaped her criticism. But the consequences of that prolonged union between Chamberlain Alving and his wife are not yet exhausted. There yet remains the disease which appears in Osvald as a paternal inheritance; and then, last of all, the relations between Osvald and Regine reveal a gulf of new possibilities.

This is what the current view leads to; these are the consequences of those conventional opinions that stalk among us like ghosts. Tear off the veil, scrape away the superficial layer of hypocrisy,

and the grinning features of selfishness will confront you, not only in persons like Regine and cabinet-maker Ensgrand, but even in such hard-headed and worthy members of society as Pastor Manders.

No other of Ibsen's works makes so deep and comprehensive an analysis of the prevalent morality. He well knew how superficial was the morality in whose name the ending of "A Doll Home" had been condemned, how much rottenness and vulgarity, how much cowardice and hypocrisy, found shelter beneath it. He knew how unsubstantial the foundation upon which society rests. Popular morality was to him a vast bog; only the lightest persons can cross it without noticing that the ground is not firm beneath their feet, while he whose steps go through learns that, the deeper he sinks, the more yielding becomes the earth beneath him. He is seized with panic; he struggles to gain a foothold, but he does not find it, for there is none to find. It is worse than a bog, it is as if the firm compact earth itself were torn from under his feet, and he were cast upon the open sea.

Such was the impression made by the appearance of "Ghosts;" it was overpowering in its tragedy, and all the more effective for being carved out of the life of the present day. The boldness

and compass of its thought were fairly terrifying; even those who had followed Ibsen step by step, and from drama to drama, shrank back in fear at their first glimpse of the abyss that yawned before them, and endeavored to seek safety in flight. As for the public in general, it set up, through its representatives in the press, a scandalized howl the like of which had not been heard since the appearance of "Love's Comedy." As in 1862, so in 1881, Ibsen was attacked both in his public and his private character; upon him were heaped all the scurrilous vulgarities that are the usual weapons of the public when it seeks to weaken the effect of the work of some venturesome and genial soul. As one of those who at first failed fully to realize the range and significance of the piece, and who in consequence occupied a non-partisan position with reference to it, I had excellent opportunities for observing this mud-volcano in its full activity. The sight was not an edifying one, but nothing else could have done so much in the way of a propaganda of the views expressed in the play, as the testimony thus borne by "society" to its truths.

That the reception accorded to "Ghosts" aroused Ibsen's indignation goes without saying. After a briefer lapse of time than usual, he had a new piece in readiness, which was at once a defence of him-

self and a return of the compliment to his opponents. Dr. Tomas Stockmann, in "An Enemy of the People," was placed in a situation exactly similar to that in which Ibsen found himself. He did not, indeed, attempt to show that the current morality of marriage flows from unhealthy sources, but he did something precisely analogous when he pointed out the unhealthiness of the baths in his native village. Upon this there followed vehement opposition, he was deserted at all hands, indignation was aroused, and no one would listen to him. The situation is that in which "Ghosts" placed Henrik Ibsen. Then he permits his hero to make the discovery that society is base and paltry, upon which Stockmann speaks out both for the author and himself, and tells society the truth. It is not a disgrace to be persecuted by such a society, but rather an honor for which every exalted soul must strive. And so far from being crushed by the opposition thus aroused, one is strengthened by it; for the man who is in full accord with society is a weak man, an insignificant character, bound hand and foot by social customs and conventions, while "the strong man is he who stands most alone."

The manner in which the attack is here made is both new and interesting. It is a direct attack all along the line, not one made from a safe and protected position. It is an advance as far as it is

possible to come, an onslaught that does not stop to consider whether or not there are uncovered places along the road it takes; not even if these places may be made points of attack from the rear upon the storming columns of thought.

And equally new and interesting is the fact that here, in the name of liberty, war is waged upon liberalism and that tyranny of the majority to which liberalism has given birth. Who is right, the man of genius, or society; the majority, or the individual? "The majority is always right, and always sees the truth," answer the two members of the majority,—Hovstad and Billing. "The majority is never right,—never, I say," answers Doctor Stockmann. "I am right, and a few others, here and there, . . . who have taken hold of the new, growing truths, too young in the world of consciousness to have gathered any majority to their support. . . . These men stand out as an advance guard, so far ahead of the rest that the compact files of the majority have not yet reached them."

Æsthetically considered, "An Enemy of the People" is not one of the best of Ibsen's works. He is hardly to be forgiven for making the allegory of the water-pipes, in the third act, give place to a directly polemical attack upon society; this transition from the image to that for which it stands produces a little of the effect of a change

of theme. But it affords a striking measure of the strength of the indignation to which the piece owed its origin. So mighty was this indignation that it could not be contained within its allegorical setting, but had to shape a channel for itself, just as a stream breaks through its restraining banks at the time of the spring freshets.

But psychologically considered, Ibsen has in this work displayed his usual mastery; in spite of the fact that Stockmann's situation strongly resembled his own, he succeeded in treating it objectively. The character is far from being a mere mouth-piece for the author's opinions, and is an exceptionally successful study in modern psychology. Stockmann is individual enough to satisfy the most exacting naturalist, and his development is at every point inevitable. At first, perhaps, it may seem inconsistent that a man who appears so unsuspecting in the first act should speak as Stockmann does in the fourth. But we see the matter in a different light upon a closer examination. It is precisely because he is at first so unsuspecting that the insight into social relations finally gained by him has so powerful an effect upon him. It is precisely for this reason that he is enabled to take so free a view of the matter, and so undaunted a stand. It was also a brilliant idea in the author to represent him as absent-

mind; the very fact that he is apt to forget little things makes it easy for him to overlook all minor considerations and fix his undivided attention upon the principal thing. He is a wholly new and original figure in Ibsen's gallery, although his development follows in the path of many of his predecessors.

Yet there is something new in this very development, something that takes us farther than the earlier works. Like Falk, Brand, Nora, and the others, Stockmann ends in isolation; but isolation, in this case, is not synonymous with flight from society. There is, indeed, a moment in which Stockmann thinks of flight. "If I only knew of some primitive forest or some South Sea island to be bought cheaply," he says; and even if he cannot find such a refuge, at all events he will go away somewhere. "We will live no longer in the midst of such corruption. Pack up as quickly as thou canst, Katrine; the sooner we get away the better." But he abandons this plan upon reflection; he stands by his post to win followers to his side and renew the conflict. "Here is the battlefield; here shall the combat take place; here will I conquer! Shall I perchance be driven from the field by public opinion and a compact majority and similar abominations? No, thank you! For my purpose is simple, and clear, and straight-

forward. I will beat it into the heads of these curs that the liberals are the most insidious foes of freemen, that party-platforms are the death-warrant of all vital truth, that considerations of expediency turn morality and justice topsy-turvy, and that as a result of all this it has become horrible to live here!" Disregarding Stockmann's peculiar forms of expression, we may see in these words the programme adopted by Ibsen after "Ghosts" had been rejected by the general public of the Scandinavian countries. It was a distinct and energetic return of the compliment. He was not the man to be frightened as easily as that.

But after the fire that had blazed up in "An Enemy of the People" had subsided, a sort of despondency seemed to settle upon Ibsen. What was the use of it, after all? Were men really capable of adopting the ideal standards of his work? Did their condition, on the whole, make it possible to live lives of truth and freedom? Were the conditions of such a life not confined to the few, the exceptions; and was not falsehood as necessary for the average man as air and food for us all? It had been said of Brand that "his morality, carried to its logical conclusion, would bring half mankind to starvation through love of the ideal;" was this not true, after all? And what, if it should be true, not only of Brand's morality, but of Ibsen's whole ideal

view of life? Was it not senseless to go about making the uncompromisingly ideal demand of everyday people?

There came to Ibsen a period when his mood was such that he asked himself these questions, and, for a time, he was almost ready to answer them in the affirmative.

So he once more brought forward his ideal heaven-stormer, looked at him in another aspect, placed him under new conditions, and, to correct the impression, shaped a contrasting figure to go with him. The work in which this plan was carried out is the saddest and most pessimistic that he has written. Brandes and others have justly urged that, back of Ibsen's pessimistic view of human nature, there lies a markedly optimistic faith in its capability of being made better. When he wrote "*The Wild Duck*," it almost seems as if this faith had for a moment betrayed him.

Gregers Werle has neither Brand's strength nor Stockmann's belligerency; he is a poor, unfortunate dreamer, everywhere out of place, seeming to have no other object in the world than "to be the thirteenth at table." He has the best opinion of mankind, and the most honest purpose to help where help is needed, but whenever he takes hold of anything, he only makes mischief, because his idealism and his optimism mistake both means

and end. He would lift his childhood's friend from out of the bog into which he has sunk, and thinks that this may be done merely by bringing the truth to light; but the only result of his efforts is to make that friend reveal the entire extent of his paltriness. He would persuade Hedwig to sacrifice herself that she may win once more her father's love, but he only succeeds in driving her to commit suicide, which adds a new feature to Hjalmar Ekdal's repertoire of declamation. Finally, he gives it all up, and quits the scene to put himself out of the world; for life, if it really be what it now appears to him, is not worth living.

Diametrically opposed to this unhappy Don Quijote, we have Relling, with his theory of falsehood, and the life which he fits to it. The world is a wretched place, and men are all bunglers; of what earthly use is any attempt to raise them out of falsehood? They live upon lies; without lying they would be as uncomfortable as a frog under the receiver of an air-pump. "Take falsehood from an average man, and you take his happiness as well;" falsehood is the stimulating principle of life, — it is like the issue which the physician puts upon a patient's neck. In consequence of this view, Relling works for the exact opposite of what Gregers is striving after; he works in behalf of falsehood, and invents lies for

those who cannot hit upon sufficiently stimulating lies of their own. He makes Molvik fancy himself to be devilish; if he had not done so "the poor honest hog would have succumbed to self-contempt and despair years ago." And he puts it into Hjalmar Ekdal's head to go about declaiming. At bottom, both he and Gregers Werle have the same purpose, that of causing happiness and contentment; but their means are as unlike as possible, and so they hate one another, and inveigh against one another, as only two enlightened combatants can. Relling considers Gregers as nothing less than an idiot suffering from a fever for righteousness and a delirium for adoration. And Gregers regards Relling as a cynic and nothing more. But Ibsen has a slightly different view of this pessimistic prophet of falsehood; he points out the good heart that beats back of this work in the service of falsehood; and when it comes to an estimate of Hjalmar Ekdal, he sides with Relling and not with Gregers.

In Ibsen's gallery of bunglers Hjalmar Ekdal has the distinction of being the worst of them all. Peer Gynt is a man of worth, and Stensgaard a sterling fellow in comparison with this miserable being, with his mouth full of beer, buttered bread, and empty phrases, and enjoying the latter almost

as much as the former. There is nothing in the world that will not serve him as a subject to de-claim upon; events themselves cause him no emotion, but he is easily stirred by hearing himself talk about them, and so he goes about enjoying his own emotions early and late. The figure is powerfully drawn, with broad and heavy lines; at times the pencil is applied with such force that the effect is almost farcical. But we cannot laugh at it with a good conscience; the paltriness is too great to excite healthy laughter; it only excites abhorrence and loathing. If the average man were indeed of such poor calibre, Relling would be absolutely right, and Gregers Werle absolutely wrong; but then Ibsen's whole fight against vacillation and falsehood would have been in vain, for the spirits of truth and freedom, the pillars of the society that shall be, would be forever homeless among men.

The despondency which produced "The Wild Duck" was not of long duration. In Ibsen's last work it has disappeared, and his idealism appears anew, in a nobler and more lovable shape than ever before.

"Rosmersholm" is closely related, in a certain way, to Ibsen's last visit to Norway, in the summer of 1885. Since his last previous visit, the great political struggle had been fought out, and had

left behind a fanaticism and a bitterness of feeling that amazed him. He was struck by the prevailing intolerance of tone among us; he was unpleasantly affected by the baleful and vulgar manner in which persons, rather than principles, were made the object of attack. The sight of all the enmities which the struggle had evoked made a sorrowful impression upon him. People who had formerly been the best of friends were now the worst of foes, — not from having given personal offence to one another, but merely from having arrived at different views of life. Altogether he received the impression — as he afterwards observed in conversation — that Norway was not inhabited by two million human beings, but by two million dogs and cats. This impression is reproduced in his delineation of the opposing parties in “Rosmersholm.” The bitterness of the losing party has found an admirable representative in Rector Kroll, and the victorious party’s cowardly fear of speaking frankly is no less admirably represented by the free-thinker and opportunist Mortensgaard, who considers it necessary to make Christian alliances. “Peder Mortensgaard is chief and lord of the future,” says Brendel. “I have never stood in the presence of a greater. Peder Mortensgaard has the gift of almightiness. He can do whatever he will,” because “he never will do more than he can.

Peder Mortensgaard is capable of going through life without ideals. And *that*, — mark you! — that is the great secret of action and victory. That is the sum of all worldly wisdom." And of the struggle in its general aspect, Rösmer says: "Men are growing evil in the conflict now being waged. Peace and joy and reconciliation must be brought to their souls." Humanity tends toward something nobler; the mind must be set free and the will purified. And even if Rosmer is not the man for such a task, yet the task remains as that which the piece has in view. It is not merely for the cause of truth and liberty that Ibsen is here contending; it is for the cause of tolerance and humanity as well.

Still deeper than the contrast between parties is the contrast between what Rosmer and Rebekka represent.

Rebekka was the incarnation of recklessness, to begin with. "I believe that then I could have carried any point whatever," she says. "For then I had my courageous, free-born will. I took heed of nothing, gave way to no condition." She was Peer Gynt's exact opposite in the fact that there was for her no gap between conception and execution, between wish and act; she had courage in resolution and was intrepid in action, and thus she gained so immense a power over those among

whom she was thrown, — those whose view of life had made them feeble and discouraged. They have incomplete and vacillating personalities; she, on the other hand, has a complete personality in her way, and this is the secret of her superiority. And besides this free-grown will, unchecked in its growth by circumstances, she has the emancipated view of life that these circumstances have developed. No prejudices restrict her activity; and her clear and powerful intellect has impelled her “to be of the new era that was dawning, — to share in all the new ideas.” She will work for the triumph of “the new ideas,” and when she learns that Pastor Rosmer has been, in his youth, under the influence of Ulrik Brendel, she resolves to acquire a similar influence over him, that she may win him over to the new view of life.

But in her plan there are also mingled motives of a purely personal character. She has come from Finland, and a great new world seems to have opened before her here in the South. She has lived under sad and degrading conditions; an irresistible desire for happiness has seized upon her, and so she has laid her plans to gain access to Rosmersholm, convinced that there happiness awaits her, in one way or another.

But hardly has she arrived when she is seized by a violent passion for Pastor Rosmer, — “a wild

and invincible desire" to possess him. "It came upon me like a storm from the sea. It was like one of our Northern winter storms. It seizes and bears one along — as far as may be. One cannot think of resisting." And she stakes every thing upon this passion. What right has his invalid and worn-out wife to impede his liberty and stand in the way of her passion? Beate makes his life sorrowful and unhappy; only with her away can there be any thought for him of a free, happy, and joyous life. So she drives Beate step by step to suicide in the Mölle torrent.

A year has passed since this occurrence when the play begins. The pleasantest and tenderest relation has been established between Rebekka and Rosmer, — a relation based upon love, yet not bearing its name; a relation having all the confidence of the happiest marriage, but without its external intimacies; a relation rich in cordiality and devotion, but without the violence of passion; a relation in which the minds embrace, not the bodies, and in which the friendly "thou" is the only token of affection given or received.

From the time when Rebekka first entered the house Rosmer has felt himself drawn to her. He has listened to her words, grasped her thoughts, and read in her books. Lacking in independence, impressionable as he is, she shows herself the su-

perior in all the questions that arise in their intercourse, and he allows himself to be gradually led away from his former ideal of life, finally coming to share her views unreservedly. In this respect his is the receptive mind, and hers the active one.

But in another domain this relation is reversed. His pure and noble ways of thinking, his amiability, and his humanity exert a refining influence upon her. Her robust will is softened and subdued by living with him, and her "ugly sensual desires" are calmed and lulled to sleep. "A feeling of tranquillity came upon me, — a quiet like that of a bird-cliff beneath our midnight sun." She realizes that what she felt before was not love, and so genuine love comes to abide with her, — the love that asks nothing for itself, but is willing to sacrifice every thing for its object, — "the strong love which is able to renounce, which is content with such a life as that which we two have lived in common." And when her aim is at last reached, when he begs her to take the place of his deceased wife, she dares not do it; for she now perceives that her own actions have forever separated her from him. Love has given her courage to confess and strength to sacrifice; and so she restores to him his lost sense of blamelessness, and his faith in her love, giving him renewed confidence in his power to ennoble

men by declaring everything and sacrificing his life.

But back of these shattered individual destinies there may be discerned two diverse life-principles, each one-sided and inadequate. In Rosmer we have a product of the old and outworn civilization that weakens both view and will. His view can be emancipated, but his will is weak and must remain so. In Rebekka we have a product of unsophisticated nature; her view is emancipated, and her will is strong, but it does not become purified until too late. So both these representatives of an imperfect conduct of life must need succumb, but over their bodies the play points to Ibsen's great and radiant dream of the future, his dream of the man with liberated mind and purified will. This is the exalted type of humanity that Rosmer dreamed of shaping, — the happy and noble being who shall live a life of freedom, innocence, and joy. This is the third kingdom, of which Maximos and Julian dreamed, and in which Henrik Ibsen has never lost his faith.

And as the path toward such a goal, our attention is directed to self-sacrificing love, the opposite of selfishness. To extol this love, "Rosmersholm" was written; this is the ennobling and exalting power in which the play finds its *credo*. And the *credo* is not merely of the play; it is Ibsen's own.

As he has scourged incompleteness of life and falsehood in the name of truth and freedom, so, in the name of self-sacrificing love, he has done battle with selfishness.

Truth, freedom, and love are the three cornerstones of the edifice, noble in proportion and serious in purpose, that the poet has erected in the course of years.

If we look at this edifice as a whole, we cannot fail to be impressed with its completeness. The development of Ibsen's mind shows a logical sequence that is assuredly unique among poets. He has never turned about, never taken a leap, but has moved steadily forward from point to point. The standpoint which he occupies at present is very far from that which he occupied at the start, and the intermediate standpoints have been numerous; it follows, then, as a matter of course, that he has abandoned much to which he formerly held. It has been with him as with one who, travelling through a country, loses, with every new perspective opened before him, something of his view of the road that is left behind; the principal fact to be considered is that his point of view has become ever higher, that his outlook has grown more and more free from work to work. His intellectual development has been in a path that led, not only straight forward, but uninterruptedly upward.

And this law holds good for the development of his special creative faculty. As his historical dramas surpassed his romantic ones, so his dramas of modern life dramatically surpass those dealing with historical subjects.

A whole treatise might be written upon the dramatic form of these later works, and such a treatise doubtless will at some time be written, for Ibsen is technically as remarkable among latter-day writers, as he is spiritually. His work is epoch-making in the history of dramatic art, and will doubtless exert a marked influence over the dramatic composition of the future. At the present time there is no other dramatist in Europe of whom this may be said.

The drama has not kept pace with the general development of our century; it has been overshadowed by the novel, which has taken so predominant a place, that it may almost be considered as the special art-form of modern times. And it owes this conspicuous position to the fact that it has most completely satisfied the demands of our age for truth and naturalism.

The drama has not succeeded in meeting this demand. The conventional, which has been banished from the novel, still holds sway in the drama. In Augier, in Alexandre Dumas *fils*, in Sardou, — that is to say, in the most prominent

dramatists of our age,—there is so much of the conventional that a naturalist critic like Émile Zola is abundantly justified in judging them severely. Even in Zola's own dramatic works — “Thérèse Raquin,” for example — the conventional plays so great a part that one can hardly think of them as written by the chief of the naturalistic school.

In Ibsen's dramas of modern life the conventional has disappeared, and he has been successful in the invention of a new dramatic formula, corresponding to the naturalistic formula in the novel. The characteristic feature of this formula is that the piece never begins where an ordinary piece would begin; it starts out, on the contrary, from what would be the closing point of an ordinary play. All of Ibsen's later pieces are really nothing more than so many grand final catastrophes. The situation is fully defined before the play begins; all the critical moments are past, and it becomes the task of the play merely to illuminate the given situation, and to carry it out to its remotest consequences. Had an ordinary dramatist written “A Doll Home,” Nora's forgery would have found its place as a climax midway in the play, and its consequences would have been presented in the last act. Ibsen, on the other hand, makes of the consequences the

principal matter, by representing the act as having occurred before the rise of the curtain. An ordinary dramatist would not have left Rebekka West's intrigue with Fru Rosmer out of the play; he would have shown it to us. Ibsen is content to analyze its inner and outer consequences.

This analytic method of dramatic construction is analogous with the method of ancient tragedy, as constructed by Sophocles, while in our own century Schiller, in "*Maria Stuart*," experimented with it. That which is great and epoch-making in Ibsen's application of this method is that he has discovered the power of the analytical drama to produce a naturalistic picture in the dramatic form. While the ordinary drama can offer but a suggestion of psychological conditions, the analytic drama is able to give a rich and detailed soul-portraiture; it can make men divulge their most secret thoughts, and this without resort to monologue or other improbable devices.

Ibsen has perceived this fact and put it to use; and his dramas of modern life have been given, in consequence, the unique stamp of actuality which characterizes them.

At the same time the dialogue has steadily grown more and more natural. Most dramatists are guilty of the great mistake of making their characters speak, in a greater or less degree, the

language of the author. With Ibsen each character speaks in his own language; and they do this so consistently that the peculiarities of each appear in the least details. He who has once read "An Enemy of the People," "The Wild Duck," or "Rosmersholm," will recognize one of the lines of Doctor Stockmann, or Gina Ekdal, or Ulrik Brendel, among a hundred others.

As the creator of the analytical drama of modern life, Ibsen has won a conspicuous place in the literature of our century, and the great attention recently attracted to his works in Germany shows that he is gaining a really European fame. Since Holberg's time no other Norwegian writer has played so important a part in Germany as that played by Ibsen at the present moment. His works promise to mark an epoch in German literature; for a large number of the younger authors and critics, with his name upon their banner, have declared their opposition to the German poets of the older generation.

But the great public has not yet accorded him full recognition, — not in Germany, and even less in Norway. It does not feel at ease face to face with this severe judge; it is made uncomfortable by his poetry, and frightened by its tragic power. The depth of his thought makes unusual demands upon the intelligence of an audience, and so he is con-

sidered heavy and difficult of comprehension. He is often, indeed, wholly misunderstood, as has been shown in many instances.

But he goes tranquilly his own way without asking for the applause of the many. "Neither thanks nor menaces may touch him who wills absolutely what he wills." He has solved the problem of "being himself," and for that reason is he so imposing a figure.

This mighty personality is also revealed in his outward form. As is well known, he is not tall of stature, but he makes an imposing impression. His chest is very powerfully developed, and his head is in proportion. The oval of his face is framed by gray hair and beard, sticking out in all directions with a luxuriance rare in men of Ibsen's age. The compressed lips, the steady gaze through the spectacles, and the heavy eyebrows, produce an impression of resolution in which all the features share; and above all there rises so powerfully shaped a brow that one is almost tempted to liken it to the forehead idealized in the Zeus of Otricoli.

The whole figure gives the impression of enormous strength. When in conversation, upon one occasion, he likened Grundtvig to one of the low but stoutly built Roman oaks, I thought in my own mind that the figure was as characteristic of his own, as of Grundtvig's outward form.

No one has ever heard of his being sick. Even those infirmities which usually come with age have been spared him. He impresses one as vigor personified. He eats with an appetite that many a young man might envy, and is not affected by draughts or wind, by cold or rain.

With his wife, Susannah Daae Ibsen, Thoresen by birth, a daughter of Dean Thoresen, of Bergen, and a step-daughter of the authoress Magdalena Thoresen, — as well as, until recently, with Dr. Sigurd Ibsen, his son, at present an attaché of the Swedish-Norwegian legation at Washington, he has enjoyed a quiet and contented domestic life in Germany or Italy, since his departure from Norway. He is method personified in everything that he undertakes. One would search far before finding another man whose days are so methodically marked out as those of Henrik Ibsen.

He rises at seven in summer and a little later in winter. He takes plenty of time in dressing; he has, in fact, acquired the habit of walking about revolving his poetic plans while putting on his clothes, so it often takes him an hour or two to get ready. Then he eats a light breakfast, and at the stroke of nine sits down at his writing-desk. At one o'clock he leaves his desk, and takes a little walk before dinner. In the afternoon he reads; he sups early, and goes to bed early. Thus his

days are divided year out and year in. Even when upon his travels he endeavors, as far as possible, to live in his usual way.

Ibsen has grown less reserved with years, and is quite free in conversation when but one or two are present. In the presence of many, however, it is still difficult for him to express himself; he feels the "shyness of soul" of which Jatgeir the skald speaks. He feels entirely free only when at work.

His methods of composition are interesting and characteristic. When he has selected his material, he turns it over in his mind for a long while before setting pen to paper. A great deal of this thinking is done while taking long and solitary walks.

When the whole plan is thought out in general outline he makes a rough sketch of it, which he then proceeds to shape, and this is done very rapidly. Finally the manuscript is complete; but this manuscript is considered a mere preliminary. Not until it is completed does he begin to feel acquainted with his characters, to know their dispositions, and to feel sure of the manner in which they will express themselves. So this first manuscript is worked over into a second, and from the second a third is carefully written out. He never dispatches a manuscript until carefully re-written in its final form.

Summer is the best season for work with him. In winter he is mainly occupied in thinking out his plans. In the summer he puts them into execution. Nearly all of his works have been written in the summer months. Of those published since he left Norway in 1864, only two, "The Young Men's Union" and "Emperor and Galilean," were written in winter.

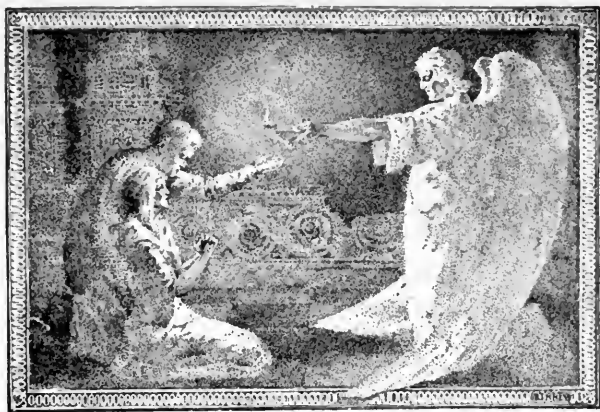
When he sets about the execution of one of his plans, he takes only what food is absolutely necessary. A small piece of bread and half a cup of black coffee is all that he takes before sitting down to his desk in the morning. He thinks that he would be impeded in his work if he were to eat more.

Once, when I visited him in Munich, I was amazed to notice how small and close his study was. But this is explained by the fact that he never shuts himself in while at work. He has to pace back and forth through three or four rooms while writing his plays. So he spends four hours every forenoon pacing and writing, writing and pacing, now and then taking a pull at a pipe. Otherwise, he never smokes tobacco.

During these hours of work he must be alone. His wife is the only one whose presence does not disturb him, and even she keeps out of the way as much as possible.

It is during these solitary and restless paces to and fro that Henrik Ibsen has written those profound and daring masterpieces, that have opened the eyes of literary Europe to see in him one of the strongest and best-equipped personalities of our age.

NOTE. — The biography as written by Henrik Jæger, and published in 1888, when Ibsen was sixty years old, ends at this point. The following supplementary chapter, describing the six plays subsequently written, has been prepared by the translator of the present volume.



VII.

THE END OF THE HISTORY.

THE year of Ibsen's sixtieth anniversary witnessed the publication of "The Lady from the Sea." The history of this play seems to be connected with Ibsen's summer visit to Norway three years earlier. He had remained most of the time at the seacoast town of Molde, a stopping-place for tourists on their way to the North Cape. The play seems to be based in part upon his impressions of the summer life of this place, aroused to a brief season of activity by the impact of the tourist folk, whose numbers had grown greatly during the period of Ibsen's self-imposed exile from his native land. But in still greater part the play is based upon the poet's impressions of the sea itself. An English writer speaks of this so-

jour in the following terms: "He would stand for hours on the landing-pier, gazing down into the depths or up at the distance. And when, in the following year, he was selecting a retreat for the summer months, he went to Jutland, instead of to the Tyrol as usual, and again it was the sea which enchanted and absorbed him as he wandered alone on the sandy shore."

"The Lady from the Sea" is a title literally translated from an expression which, in slightly altered form, also means "mermaid." Throughout the work Ibsen plays upon the two meanings of the expression, which thus serves him as a vehicle for the symbolism which is nearly always to be found in his writings. The central figure of the play is a woman, Ellida Wangel, whose childhood has been passed in a lonely lighthouse, and whose nature has become possessed of the very spirit of the sea, its vastness, its unfathomable depth, and its uncontrollable freedom. To her there had appeared one day a sailor, a ship's officer who was also a fugitive from justice. She had been captivated by the thought of his free and irresponsible life, and the two had entered into a sort of betrothal, the man assuring the woman that he would one day return to claim her, and that when the day came, she must be prepared to go away with him. Several years have passed

since then when the play opens; the sailor has been reported as dead, and Ellida has become the second wife of Dr. Wangel, a well-to-do physician, much older than herself, and the father of two fairly grown daughters. The union has not proved altogether happy, for the thought of her strange lover lies upon Ellida's mind as an obsession, and, although she thinks him dead, her imagination often pictures him as rising from the sea to claim her. She feels that her will would not be strong enough to resist such a demand upon her, and this feeling creates an estrangement between herself and the family with which she has become united. The husband and daughters are sensible of this estrangement, but know nothing of its cause. The state of Ellida's mind, as thus portrayed, is one that clearly places her in the shadowy limbo between sanity and insanity, in that borderland of the mental life which Ibsen has so often explored with sharp penetration and delicate art.

The opening scenes of the play, by means of a series of incidents contrived with great technical skill, place this character before us, and at the same time cause us to surmise that her strange early lover is still alive. She is impelled to disclose her secret, at first, and in part only, to Arnholm, an old friend, then, a little later, to her

husband. Soon after the disclosure has been made, the long absent sailor appears, just landed from an English steamer. He comes to Ellida in her garden, and terrifies her by his demand that she depart with him at once. Wangel enters almost immediately, and she implores her husband to save her from herself.

WANGEL.¹ What do you want to do, then? You can't imagine that you can take her from me by force, — against her own will!

THE STRANGER. No. What would be the use of that? If Ellida is to be mine, she must come of her own free will.

ELLIDA [*starts and cries out*]. Of my own free will — !

WANGEL. And can you suppose — ?

ELLIDA [*to herself*]. My own free will !

WANGEL. You must be out of your mind. Go away ! Go away ! We have nothing more to do with you.

The stranger leaves, warning Ellida that he shall come for her the following night, when her decision must be made once for all. Wangel, alarmed at his wife's agitation, and in his character as a physician understanding it better than another man would have done, seeks to calm her, and during the next day his efforts to this end are unceasing. The reference to "her own free will" has deeply impressed

¹ The illustrations of this play are taken from the translation by Mrs. William Archer.

her, and she asks Wangel to give her back her freedom in order that she may face the situation untrammelled by any obligations, and thus work out her own destiny. To this demand Wangel cannot then accede, and thus we are left when the last fateful act is reached.

The final scene is laid in the garden, at night. Wangel and Ellida are together when the stranger appears. Upon the reiteration of his demand, Wangel at first pleads with his wife, then threatens the stranger, and finally grants her impassioned prayer for freedom to decide. "Now you can choose in freedom, and on your own responsibility, Ellida." It is this suggestion of responsibility that determines the direction of her wavering impulses, and saves her for sanity and the orderly life of society. Fixing her eyes upon the stranger, she declares firmly that she can never go with him. "Your will has no longer a feather's weight with me. For me you are a dead man, who has come home from the sea — and who is returning to it again. But I am no longer in awe of you: you allure me no more." Turning to her husband as the stranger disappears forever from her life and her imagination, she says: "Yes, my dear, faithful Wangel — now I will come to you again. Now I can, for now I come to you in freedom — of my own will — and on my own responsibility."

The lesson of all this is clear enough; it is the lesson enforced by Ibsen over and over again, the lesson that no action has moral worth unless it is the outcome of the individual will, unhampered in its free activity by any extraneous circumstances. Even the most sacred of the conventional sanctions of human conduct must give way before the imperious demand of the individual to be the captain of his own soul and the master of his own fate. If Ibsen generally prefers to make women rather than men the embodiment of this idea, it is because the danger of living artificial lives is for them the greater, because in the present condition of society they are the greater sufferers from the tyranny of convention and prescription.

"Hedda Gabler," published in 1890, stands in striking contrast to "The Lady from the Sea," both in its tragic outcome, and in its freedom from more than the merest traces of the symbolism that is so marked a characteristic of its predecessor. In place of a soft opalescence of tint, it has a hard brilliance of coloring that almost offends the eye. But in technical execution, in its fitting of means to ends, in its use of the telling phrase and the pregnant situation, "Hedda Gabler" is a masterpiece of dramaturgic virtuosity. It is at the same time one of the least pleasing and one of the most powerful of Ibsen's modern plays.

If Ellida was a woman who could find rest and true freedom in her ultimate submission to the moral law, Hedda is a woman whose restlessness and lack of any controlling purpose save the satisfaction of her own selfish desires are such that a tragic end is inevitable. She is the daughter of a Norwegian officer, who has bequeathed to her a pair of pistols. This incident must be mentioned because the pistols play an important part in the play. As a young woman she has had many admirers, among them one Ejlert Lövborg, a man of brilliant intellect and unregulated life, with whom she is on terms of intimacy. Herself passionless in the ordinary sense, she has a morbid curiosity concerning the conduct of those who live the life of passion, and this curiosity Lövborg helps her to gratify. After some years, a lover of serious intent presents himself in the person of Jörgen Tesman, a scholar of the pedantic type, who has great industry and small imagination. She marries Tesman without loving him in the least, believing that his prospects are such as to promise her a becoming social position. The couple go abroad upon a wedding-trip, which Tesman devotes almost wholly to the exploration of archives and the accumulation of material for his studies.

The play opens with the return of these two to Norway. Hedda is already tired to death of her

domestic experiment, and is prepared to seek distraction wherever it may be found. Tesman, good, easy man, cannot see beneath the surface of her life, and imagines that she is no less contented with life than he. What more could a woman ask? She has a comfortable home, and an assured social position. She is, moreover, the wife of a man of growing scholarly reputation, who has a reasonable assurance of nomination to a vacant professorship. At this juncture Lövborg appears upon the scene. He has reformed his dissipated habits, largely under the influence of Thea Elvsted, a woman of the gentle and clinging type, between whom and Hedda there exists the strongest possible of contrasts. Aided by Thea's friendship, Lövborg has regained his intellectual powers, has published an important book upon the history of civilization, and has prepared the manuscript of another and still more important work. He has thus become a possible rival to Tesman in his own field, and the latter is made uneasy, although too good-hearted to feel really envious of his friend. Speaking for the first time to Tesman of his manuscript, Lövborg describes it as a continuation of the published work.

TESMAN. But, my dear Ejler, your book comes down to our own times.

LÖVBORG. So it does. And this one deals with the future.

TESMAN. The future ! Why, good heavens ! We don't know anything about that.

LÖVBORG. No. But there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*He opens the package.*] Now here —

TESMAN. But that is n't your handwriting.

LÖVBORG. I dictated it. [*He turns over the pages.*] This first part is about the forces that will determine the future of civilization. And this other [*turning the page further on*] — this is about the course that civilization will take.

TESMAN. Extraordinary ! Now I should never have thought of writing anything about that.

HEDDA [*at the glass door, strumming on the pane*]. Hm — No, I should say not.

In this last bit of dialogue, Tesman's whole character is revealed, as well as the scorn felt by his wife for his essentially commonplace mind. It certainly never would have occurred to him to attempt a forecast of the future of civilization, and to Hedda this fact is deeply significant.

Hedda has no very definite aim, but she is conscious of the possession of powers of which Tesman can have no comprehension, and these powers she is determined to exercise, no matter what the cost. A woman of truer poise and finer instincts would seek to realize the joy of life (as so many of Ibsen's women do); what Hedda seeks to realize is the joy of mastery, the



HENRIK IBSEN

(In the eighties)

satisfaction of influencing the lives of others, and forcing herself into their reckoning. Tesman's inert stolidity has baffled her efforts, and she must seek another object for the exercise of her baleful powers. Lövborg appears on the scene, and her cravings are aroused. He has reformed; she will persuade him to his undoing. He has found contentment in the companionship of Thea; she will destroy that contentment, and reawaken the old wild impulses within his breast. That she is deliberately aiming at the happiness of two fellow-mortals is nothing to her; what is the happiness of others in comparison with the wild pleasure of subduing weak wills to her own strong one, of shaping human lives by her own dæmonic power? In this unholy design she is only too successful. Playing upon Lövborg's latent vanity, she persuades him to drink again. He falls readily into his old path, spends the night in reckless carousal, and, incidentally, loses the manuscript of his precious new work. The papers fall into Hedda's hands, and are kept by her. The next day he comes to her, remorseful at the thought of his lapse, but believing that he himself has destroyed his book in a drunken frenzy. He is determined to make an end of his life, and Hedda, instead of dissuading him, finds in this situation a supreme opportunity for the exercise of her power. She gives him one

of her father's pistols, and bids him do it "in beauty." With this mandate ringing in his ears, Lövborg departs, and Hedda, left alone, takes his manuscript from her desk, and deliberately casts it, leaf by leaf, into the fire. Her purpose is accomplished; she has destroyed one human life, and wrecked the happiness of another.

In the last act, retribution comes upon her. Lövborg's death has been followed by an investigation, the pistol has been found, and Hedda's part in the affair promises to be made public. Brack, another of her early admirers, a reptilian sort of person, has it in his power to suppress the evidence, and offers to do so upon her entering into an infamous understanding with him. But Hedda, however she may excite our repulsion in other ways, is not that sort of a woman, and to her this is no solution of the problem that now confronts her. She has a horror of such relationships, and she has an equal horror of public scandal. She has played with fire, and it has burned her; she must now face the consequences. Her resolution is quickly taken, and, fetching from her desk the pistol still left her, she goes into the back room. A shot is heard, and the tragedy is ended.

There does not seem to be any particular problem in the play, beyond the general problem of the false position of woman in our modern society.

As long as the individuality of woman is kept from its normal healthy development, Ibsen seems to say, just so long will all sorts of aberrant types make their appearance. Ibsen's women are usually creatures who inspire our warmest sympathies; they are intensely womanly, and they are, as a rule, spiritually superior to his men. But for once he has gone to the other extreme, and has drawn, as Brandes remarks, "a woman who is more manly than most men, in so far as she has the keenest perception of the mawkishness of the prevailing idea of goodness, but who nevertheless is a morally and spiritually unfruitful being, capable of nothing but ruining, destroying, and dying."

With "The Master Builder," published in 1892, Ibsen reverts to his symbolical manner, and creates a situation which is even more interesting for its suggestiveness than for its literal content. It will be remembered that he once wrote concerning "Brand" that the problem involved in the delineation of that figure was not essentially a religious one. "I might have embodied the symbolism in the person of a sculptor or a politician as well as in that of a priest." One does not need to have read far in his Ibsen to understand this remark, to appreciate the fact that with this writer the problem of the type of character is everything; the environment or the shape given

is little or nothing. The least essential thing, then, about Halvard Solness, the principal character in Ibsen's new play, is the nature of his profession, which is that of a master builder. But when we come to ask what is the problem, what the type that the author has sought to portray in his latest work, we are somewhat puzzled about our answer. It is, as far as the leading character is concerned, a study in morbid psychology; but the type is highly complex, and does not readily lend itself to definition.

The characters of the play are these: Halvard Solness, the master builder, a man in middle life; Aline, his wife; Doctor Herdal, the family physician; Knut Brovik, a decayed architect, and his son, Ragnar, both now employed by Solness; Kaja Fosli, niece of Knut Brovik, also employed by Solness; and Hilda Wangel, a young woman of whom more hereafter. The play is in three acts, all of which occur in and about the house occupied by Solness both as a place of business and a dwelling. To explain the action of the play, we must, as usual with Ibsen's works, recount the past events which it involves.

Solness had started as a poor boy in the employ of Architect Brovik. His fortune began with the burning of the family home of his wife, to whom he was early married. In the work of re-

building he found an opportunity to exercise his skill, and was thus embarked upon a successful professional career. But the burning of the home had tragic consequences, for it occurred on a winter night, and the exposure brought illness to his wife and death to the twin boys, their children. Professional success attended his steps from this time on, and at the opening of the play his position as the one architect of the district is unquestioned. But the fatal accident of twelve years before still affects both the lives that were darkened by it. Both continue to brood over their loss, and both show the symptoms of incipient mental derangement, or, at least, a morbid condition of mind that borders on derangement. As one sign of psychological disturbance, Solness is haunted by the fear that his position is not secure, that younger men will spring up to supplant him, just as he had supplanted Brovik. This fear is emphasized by his employment of young Brovik, in whom he recognizes a talent that he seeks to suppress. Now, Ragnar Brovik is engaged to marry a young girl, Kaja Fosli by name. Solness employs this young woman as a bookkeeper, hoping thereby to keep Ragnar from seeking an independent career. But Kaja, soon after entering upon her work, becomes passionately attached to Solness, who seems to encourage her affection

without exactly returning it, and is careless of consequences, so long as he may keep Ragnar under his control.

When the play opens, Ragnar has just had the opportunity to design a villa for some wealthy people of the district, and wishes his employer to give the plans the stamp of his approval. The elder Brovik, who is rapidly failing in health, wishes to see his son established in life before leaving him forever, and, in an interview with Solness, requests this favor for his son. Solness refuses the request, and the old man goes away sadly disappointed. A little later, in a scene between Solness and Dr. Herdal, the former describes the way in which Kaja had come into his employment. She had appeared one day on a visit to her uncle and cousin. Solness had stood and looked at her, persistently wishing that he might have her in the office, but saying nothing about it. The next day she had come again, and acted as if an agreement had already been made between them. In a word, Ibsen seems to attribute to Solness the power of telepathic suggestion. This idea is borne out by what follows, since, in the second act, after relating to Hilda some singular experiences in his past history, he asks her: —

“Do you not believe this too, Hilda, that there are a few picked and chosen people to whom has fallen the

grace, the power, the gift to *wish* a thing, to *desire* a thing, to *will* a thing — so persistently and so — inexorably — that they must get it at last? Do you not believe this? ”

Solness believes this, at all events ; it has become his *idée fixe* ; it provides a clue to the intricacies of his mental life. It means for him not only the power of projecting his thoughts into the minds of others, but also the power of so affecting material things as to shape them to his wishes. As a subjective fact, the author is perfectly justified in attributing this mania to Solness, but he taxes the scientific reason more severely than is allowable when he supplies the illusion with such objective corroborations as that already given, or as the one to be mentioned presently.

In his talk with Herdal, the master builder is giving confidential expression to his haunting fear of being pushed aside by the younger generation, and has just said, “Some time youth will come this way and knock at the door,” when an actual knock is heard, and Hilda appears upon the scene. She is the younger daughter of Dr. Wangel in “The Lady from the Sea,” now grown to be a young woman of twenty-three. Ten years before this very day, Solness had celebrated the erection of a new spire upon the church of her village. It was the custom for the builder, upon the comple-

tion of such a work, to climb the scaffolding, and place a wreath upon the weather-vane of the spire. This Solness had done, amid the plaudits of the crowd; and of this the child Hilda had been a spectator, shouting "Hurra for Builder Solness!" and excitedly waving a flag. Afterwards Solness had been entertained at her father's house. Hilda now comes to tell him that upon the day of the festival, he had taken her in his arms, kissed her, and promised to come in ten years and make her a princess. The ten years are now up, and since he has not come to her, she has come to him. Of all this story, Solness remembers nothing, but with his *idée fixe*, he understands that he must have wished it, and so accepts the situation, pretending to recall the circumstances.

Hilda, upon her own invitation, remains in the house as a guest of the family, Mrs. Solness making no apparent objection. Solness, who is drawn toward Hilda by a strong feeling of sympathy, makes of her the confidant that he cannot make of his sickly and brooding wife, and the second act (the next day) is mainly taken up by conversations between the two. Hilda is intended by the author to stand in sharp contrast to Solness, and the sympathy between them is that of complementary natures. His mania has resulted in a morbid development of conscience; she is the personification

of recklessness, in this suggesting the character of Rebekka in "Rosmersholm." The thought of duty repels her ; she lives in her passion for excitement, and does not concern herself with the means by which it may be satisfied. In his conversation with her, Solness reveals the secret that has been gnawing at his heart for years. Believing that his wishes, if sufficiently intense, must become translated into objective fact, he holds himself responsible for the tragic event that had bereft him of his children and cast a dark shadow over the mind of his wife. For he had started in life full of ambition, and he had wished that the old house might burn and open a way for his ambition. From that destruction had dated his professional success, and from it also the morbid sense of guilt that has made his subsequent life so unhappy. "Is it not frightful to think," he says, "that I must now go about and reckon it up, pay for it? — not with money, but with human happiness. And not merely with my own ; with that of others too. Do you see *that*, Hilda? That is what my artistic success has cost me — and others. And every livelong day I must go about and see the price paid for me anew. Again, and again, and still again."

In the third and last act of the play, following the second upon the same day, the influence of Hilda upon Solness reaches its culmination. He

finds in her the warm human sympathy for which he has so long yearned, and which it has been useless to expect from his wife. Let us add that the communion of these two souls is purely spiritual, and that there is no touch of indelicacy in the treatment of the situation. The part of the wife is, indeed, throughout, that of self-abnegation; she realizes that she cannot enter into her husband's life, is ready to accept, and gratefully, any influence that can help to brighten and strengthen it. For a moment Hilda's conscience is aroused by pity for Aline, but the impulse is transitory, and gives way to the pleasure that she feels in exalting Solness above his normal self, in lifting him for a time out of the slough of despond into which he had sunk. Solness has been erecting a new house for his family, and the building is ready to receive its wreath from the builder according to the custom already mentioned. But Solness confesses that he becomes dizzy upon a height, and that the episode of ten years before, when he himself had crowned the church spire, and captivated Hilda's imagination, was an exceptional fact in his life, an action not since repeated. Hilda urges him to rise above himself and attempt the impossible once more; and, in his exaltation, he resolves to undertake the perilous work.

The tragic ending soon follows. Solness takes

the wreath, and, to the astonishment of his men, starts to mount the spire with it himself. He reaches the summit, hangs the wreath upon the vane, and swings his hat in the air. Hilda raises a jubilant cry, in which the others join, and Solness, tottering, falls to the ground, where he lies lifeless. Word is brought to Hilda, but she can remember only that her hero has once more realized his true self, become again what she has thought him during all the ten years of waiting, and she tenderly says, as the curtain falls, "*My — my* master builder."

"The Master Builder" is no doubt one of the most puzzling plays that Ibsen has written ; it is also one of the most fascinating. "It gives," in the words of Dr. Brandes, "at one and the same time a sense of enthrallment and a sense of deliverance." This "profoundly symbolical work" is one "that echoes and re-echoes in our minds long after we have read it. Great in its art, profound and rich in its symbolic language — these are the words that rise to our lips ; and impressed, without being touched or softened, we fall to brooding and pondering over its power."

It is the sadness and sweetness of the play, rather than the possession of symbolic power, that chiefly impress us when we turn to "Little Eyolf," published in 1894. Coming after "Hedda Gabler," and "The Master Builder," this play is

a relief to the reader, for it is simpler in plan and more obvious in significance. Many of its passages are far-reaching in their implications, and strike into the very depths of the soul; but the reader is not all the time haunted by the suggestion of some elusive allegory, some hidden meaning that leads him a will-o'-the-wisp chase and lands him in a bog of conjecture. Even the most persistent of searchers for symbols may possibly be content to take this play for what it is, and see in it nothing more than a direct transcript of life under ideal conditions arranged by a consummate artistic sense.

Alfred Allmers and his wife, Rita, have been married for some ten years, and have one child, a boy of nine, named Eyolf. The child has been crippled in infancy, and is just reaching the age when he realizes the difference between himself and other boys sound of limb. The father, passionately attached to his child, has determined to devote himself to his happiness, and bring what harmony is yet possible into a life so unfitted to battle for itself. He thus states his new-found aim: —

“I will try to bring to light all the rich possibilities that are dawning in his childish soul. I will bring to full growth, to flower and fruit, every germ of noble purpose within him. And I will do more than that. I will help

him to harmonize his wishes with what things are attainable by him. For now they are not in harmony. He longs for things that will be unattainable all his life long. But I will create joy in his mind."

These plans are all broken off by the accidental drowning in the fjord of the child, whose winsome figure, like that of Mamillius in "The Winter's Tale," makes but the briefest appearance upon the scene, then passes from our sight, although never from our memory.

The remaining two acts of the play are essentially a study of two women and their relations with Allmers. The one is his wife, the other is Asta Allmers, supposed to be his half-sister. With the latter he has grown up from childhood in the closest intimacy. Now, following close upon the loss of the child, comes the discovery that the supposed relationship of brother and sister does not exist; and the other discovery, which both realize as by a lightning flash, but which neither ventures to commit to words, that they are more to one another than even a brother and sister can be. This situation, which is treated with the greatest delicacy, closes the second act. The character of Rita, the wife, is less transparent than that of Asta, and her motives are not so easily laid bare. She is presented to us as attached to Allmers to the point of grudging him his interest in his intel-

lectual pursuits, his affection for his supposed sister, and even his absorption in the child. She sees with delight the prospect of a marriage between Asta and a young engineer, who has for some time been laying siege to the sister's heart. A strong scene between husband and wife in the first act strikes the key-note of Rita's character, which must be described as jealous, although the jealousy is of a complex sort, and more morbid than is its wont. The problem of the remaining two acts is that of working out the effects of the child's death upon this passionate nature, and upon the nature of the husband, equally passionate in its depths, but outwardly more restrained.

To trace the process by which these stricken souls find peace would be impossible without translating the greater part of the two acts that follow. For peace finally comes — or we are at least assured that its advent is imminent — to her, through love, now first realized, for the memory of the lost child; to him, through a deeper penetration into the mystery of life. At first, dazed with grief, the future a blank to both, they instinctively turn to one another for help, and, in community of grief, grope towards that higher plane of thought and feeling which is attainable by the courageous, but, perhaps, only through the refiner's fire of suffering. We leave them

with the ascent well begun, and the goal dimly in view. Moved by a common impulse of altruism, they resolve, thus bereft of their own child, to make better and brighter the lives of the village children about them, the very children who had made no effort to save Eyolf from his fate.

ALLMERS. What do you really think you can do for all these poverty-stricken children?

RITA. I will try to see if I cannot soften and ennoble their lot.

ALLMERS. If you can do that, little Eyolf was not born in vain.

RITA. Nor in vain taken from us.

ALLMERS [*resolutely, fixing his gaze upon her*]. Could I not be with you, and help you, Rita?

RITA. Would you?

ALLMERS. Yes, if I only knew that I could.

RITA [*lingeringly*]. But then you would have to stay here.

ALLMERS [*gently*]. Let us try to make it succeed.

RITA [*in a barely audible voice*]. Let us try, Alfred.

[*Both are silent. Allmers goes to the staff and raises the flag that has floated at half-mast. Rita watches him in silence.*]

ALLMERS [*coming back to her*]. There is a hard day's work before us, Rita.

RITA. But you shall see the peace of the sabbath fall upon us once more.

ALLMERS [*with quiet emotion*]. Perchance we shall have visits from the world of spirits.

RITA [*whispering*]. Spirits?

ALLMERS. Perchance they are about us — those we have lost.

RITA [*nodding slowly*]. Our little Eyolf. And your big Eyolf too.

ALLMERS [*gazing into space*]. Perhaps on our way through life — we may now and then — catch some glimpses of them.

RITA. Where shall we look, Alfred?

ALLMERS [*fixing his eyes upon her*]. Above.

RITA [*nods in assent*]. Yes, yes, above.

ALLMERS. Above — toward the mountain-peaks — toward the stars. And toward the great silence.

RITA [*stretching out her hands to him*]. Thank you.

In this lovely scene, and in the play of which it is the ending, we find once more the Ibsen that has seemed wellnigh lost of recent years, the idealist of "Brand" and "Peer Gynt," the ethical leader who has preached so many sermons upon the theme of losing life for the sake of saving it. Somewhere in the play, Rita says, "We are creatures of earth, after all;" and her husband replies, "But something akin to the sea and the heavens too, Rita." These words may almost be said to supply the key-note of the entire work.

"John Gabriel Borkman" (1896) is a play whose action is based upon an unusually complicated series of antecedent circumstances. Many

years before the play opens, Borkman was the head of a banking establishment. He was an ambitious man, and had conceived a vast plan for the exploitation of the mineral resources of his country. His aims were more than personal, for they looked to an industrial development that promised to better the lot of thousands besides himself. In the furtherance of this plan, he was tempted to a reckless use of the funds in his custody. The coöperation of a business associate named Hinkel became an absolute necessity, but had to be purchased at a great price. Both Hinkel and Borkman loved a woman, Ella Renheim, who for her part loved Borkman. The latter paid the price demanded, ceased his attentions to the woman, and instead married her twin-sister Gunhild. Hinkel, however, found that he had not bought the love he sought, although Borkman had sacrificed it, and learned to his chagrin that Ella remained faithful to the man who had given her up. He revenged himself by exposing Borkman's dealings, thus bringing about a criminal prosecution, the collapse of Borkman's schemes, and the ruin of those who had trusted in the bank. The prosecution led to Borkman's conviction, and he was sentenced to five years of imprisonment. Meanwhile Ella had placed a house and the means of support in the hands of her sister,

who, with her son Erhart, was left otherwise destitute. To this house Borkman returned after his release from prison, but held no communication with his wife, who could not forgive him for the disgrace brought upon the family name. For eight years the family lived in this strange relation, she occupying the lower apartment and he the upper. During all this time the sister had seen neither of them, but had obtained custody of Erhart for several years of his childhood, and become devotedly attached to him. When the real play begins, Erhart is twenty years of age, and is living again with his mother, but, like her, has no intercourse with the voluntary prisoner upstairs.

In the first act, a visit from Ella to her sister, after years of separation, gives an opportunity for the unfolding of the above history. In the long conversation between the sisters, their inmost nature is revealed; both are passionate, but the passion of the one has remained softened by her love for Borkman, while the passion of the other — the wife — has stiffened into the bitter pride of an unforgiving woman, and taken the form of an intense resolve that Erhart shall atone for his father's guilt, and once more raise to honor the family name. Deluded by this hope, the one thing to which she clings, the mother does not realize that Erhart has grown up to be a rather

commonplace, pleasure-loving youth, chafing under the responsibility that others would set upon his shoulders, swelling with a sense of the joy of life, and seeking distraction in the society of a young and beautiful widow, Fanny Wilton by name, who lives in a neighboring villa. All of these things the mother cannot understand; but they are realized by the sister, whose attachment to Erhart is such that through it alone he learns what a mother's love really is. The sister, finding her health enfeebled, and knowing that she has not long to live, has resolved to wrest Erhart from his sombre surroundings, if possible, and the purpose of the visit is to plead with the mother to give up her son and the "mission" to which she would devote his life. Failing in her entreaty, the sister says that she cannot live without sight of Erhart, and announces her determination to remain with him, since she may not take him away. During the whole of this long act, Borkman does not appear, but we are ever conscious of his presence, for his footsteps are heard overhead as he paces his apartment with the monotonous persistence of a caged lion.

The second act transfers the scene to Borkman's apartment, and opens with a long conversation between Borkman and Foldal,—the latter a simple-minded man of humble position, a suf-

ferer by Borkman's failure, who yet clings to his old acquaintance with a sort of dog-like fidelity. In this scene, and in the following scene with Ella, Borkman gives expression to his attitude toward those who have wronged him and been wronged by him; toward his wife and the traitor Hinkel, toward the world of his creditors, and the woman whose love he sacrificed to his ambition. In these scenes, and in the scene with his wife in the third act, we find what may be taken as the central thesis of the play. As far as the world goes, Borkman is simply defiant. He has done wrong, and has atoned for it by suffering. He failed through treachery when within a hair's-breadth of success. Others pass through such crises to fame and honor; he was luckless, and fell into the abyss when success was almost within his grasp. The crime of which the law took cognizance is not what weighs most heavily upon his soul, but the crime committed against himself and the woman he loved. As far as the former goes, he believes that he may yet regain his worldly position, but he learns from Ella's lips that in the latter he has sinned past forgiving.

"You slew the love that was in me. Do you understand what that means? The Bible speaks of a mysterious sin for which there is no forgiveness. I could not understand before what it might be. Now I understand.

The great, unpardonable sin is to slay love in a human heart."

From this personal reproach he has no words of self-defence, but from the reproach of the violated social order he seeks a somewhat sophistical refuge, as appears in the powerful third act, where he confronts his wife for the first time in eight years.

"I have given the whole case a rehearing — for myself. I have taken it up over and over again. I have been my own accuser, my own counsel, and my own judge. More unpartisan than any one else could be, I may say that. I have walked the floor up there and turned every one of my acts inside out and upside down, looked at them from before and behind in as unsparing and unpitying a way as any lawyer could have done. And the judgment I come to every time is *this* — that the only one I have sinned against is myself."

It would hardly be fair to take this defiant pronouncement as an expression of Ibsen's own opinion of Borkman's offence. Like all strong dramatists, the author has too frequently been made chargeable with the sentiments and opinions of the characters created by him. What we may, however, justly take as the author's personal message is the insistence upon individualism which is so marked in the words just translated. No matter what a man may have done, he has a right to

be heard as an individual, and commands a certain respect if he is strong enough to impress his individual character upon the minds of those with whom he is associated.

This consideration leads us to the statement of another of the leading ideas of the play. The young Erhart is an individual also, and makes good his right to be respected as such. He is beset by the claims of three persons, each determined to exact from him what he is not bound to give. The father would have him share in the work of restoring a fallen reputation. The mother would have him do much the same thing, although in a different, independent way. The aunt would have him cling to her on account of her care for his childhood. But he impatiently shakes off these attempts to control his activity, refuses to be bound by the influences of the older generation, determines to carve out his own career, and seeks for happiness in following the dictates of his own desires. We may pity him for the infatuation that takes him from home in the company of Mrs. Wilton, a woman several years his senior, and possibly we may despise him for his rejection of any and all obligations toward those who have reared and cared for him, but we must recognize that he, too, no less than his father, has the right of every individual to live his own life (the author

uses this very phrase, worn as it is, and gives it fresh vitality), to refuse to take upon his shoulders the burdens for the existence of which he is in no way responsible.

“ No man can save his brother’s soul,
Or pay his brother’s debt ”

might fairly be taken as the motto of this play, as far as it is concerned with Erhart.

After the departure of the boy in his quest of the joy of life, the drama draws rapidly to its sombre but poetically impressive close. Borkman, who has left the confinement of his apartment for the first time in years, is seized with a sort of frenzy for the free air, and rushes from the house which the departure of his son has just left desolate. Although it is a winter night, and the earth is white with snow, he cannot be persuaded to return, and the fourth act takes place out of doors. At the end, Borkman and Ella Rentheim are left together, she entreating him to seek shelter, and he declaring that he will never again breathe the air of the house that has so long confined him. Yielding to his stronger will, she follows him out into the darkness of the forest, and the landscape shifts (as in the first act of “ Parsifal ”) with their progress. Finally, Borkman sinks down exhausted upon a rustic bench. He is a dying man, but his senses are quickened

to unwonted acuteness, and he seems to enjoy a fulness of life that he has never known before.

BORKMAN. Ella ! Do you see the mountain ranges there, far over yonder, one behind the other. They rise, they tower. There is my deep, my infinite, my inexhaustible kingdom.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Ah, but there comes an icy blast from that kingdom, John.

BORKMAN. That blast is the breath of life to me, it comes like a greeting from my trusty spirits. I see them, the buried millions ; I feel the veins of metal, they stretch out their bent, branching, enticing arms toward me. I saw them before me like shades endowed with life — that night when I stood in the bank vault, candle in hand. You sought to be free then, and I tried to free you. But I could not. The treasure sank again into the depths [*stretching forth his hands*]. But I will whisper it to you here amid the peace of night. I love you as you lie there deep and dark in the semblance of death. I love you, wealth yearning for life, with all your shining train of power and glory ; I love you, love you, love you !

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with quiet, growing feeling*]. Yes, your affections are still set down there, John, they were always there. But up here in the light of day, there was a warm, living, human heart that beat for you. And you crushed that heart. Ah, more than that — tenfold worse — you sold it for — for —

BORKMAN [*shivering as with the cold*]. For the sake of the kingdom, and the power, and the glory — you mean ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I mean that. I told you this evening once before. You slew affection in the woman

who loved you, and whom you loved in return, — as far as you could love any one [*with upraised arm*]. And therefore I foretell you this, John Gabriel Borkman, you will never win the prize you craved for that deed. You will never enter triumphant into your cold and gloomy kingdom !

Borkman sinks upon the bench, and presently his wife appears, but only to find her sister watching over his dead body.

ELLA RENTHEIM. It was the cold that killed him.

FRU BORKMAN [*shaking her head*]. The cold, you say? The cold had killed him long before.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And made shadows of us both, yes.

FRU BORKMAN. You are right.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a sad smile*]. One dead man and two shadows — the cold has done that.

FRU BORKMAN. Yes, the cold in the heart. And now we may clasp hands, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I think we may now.

FRU BORKMAN. We twin-sisters, over his body, whom we both loved.

ELLA RENTHEIM. We two shadows — over the dead man.

It is evident from the above analysis that this play is one of the most straightforward and intelligible pieces of work that Ibsen has given us. It has not the tenderness of "Little Eyolf," nor has it the haunting symbolism of "The Master Builder." But it has a strength and a closeness of texture in

which these plays are somewhat lacking, and proves peculiarly effective as an acting drama.

The last of Ibsen's plays, "When We Dead Awake," was published in 1899, being separated by three years, instead of the customary two, from its predecessor. The play is further described as "a dramatic epilogue," which seems to mean that the author has definitely closed the series of problem-plays, or studies in social pathology, which was begun in 1878 with "The Pillars of Society," and which is made an even dozen by the work now under discussion. One in search of fanciful analogies might find in that first title some suggestion of an intellectual Samson determined to pull down the temple of modern society, and in the last some suggestion of the nobler social structure that may be expected to spring from the ruins of the old order.

This is, of course, the merest fancy and nothing more, but it is the prerogative of Ibsen's work to suggest ideas that lie far afield from its direct message, and it is impossible to remain literal-minded in the presence of the extraordinary series of compositions now brought to an end. Their significance is none the less real because it is elusive, and their larger implications must determine our judgment quite as much as the nicety of their dramatic craftsmanship. "When We Dead Awake"

is a title which in itself awakens many echoes from the author's earlier writings. It proclaims anew his whole insistent gospel of the need of spiritual regeneration for an age sunk in slothfulness — the gospel of Brand's

"Forth! out of this stifling pit!
Vault-like is the air of it!
Not a flag may float unfurl'd
In this dead and windless world."

It sounds once more that note of high idealism which is never altogether missing from his work, and which is the real secret of the appeal which he has so powerfully made to all who have ever dreamed of the realization of utopias and the permanent betterment of the social order.

But, whatever aspirations may breathe through his symbolism, Dr. Ibsen never forgets that he is a dramatic artist writing for the stage, and that his first concern is the concrete presentation of such men and women as we may at any time meet with in actual life. The new play opens in the most matter-of-fact way at a summer resort on the Norwegian coast. Professor Rubek and his wife Maja are seated outside the hotel. They have just finished breakfast and are reading the newspapers. Rubek is a sculptor of European reputation, who has returned to his native land after a lengthy sojourn abroad. Both are restless, and it soon transpires

that neither of them has found satisfaction during the years of their married life. It is a case of the deeper sort of incompatibility. An artist and a frivolous woman are joined together, and neither of them can give the other what is most wanted. To him has been denied inspiration for his work, to her the joyous round of gaiety which she craves. For years they have pretended a satisfaction they did not feel, but the breaking-point has nearly been reached.

All this comes out very clearly in the opening scene. Soon afterwards, the two remaining characters of the play appear. One is a landed proprietor named Ulfhejm, the other is Irene, a pale, mysterious woman who turns out to be an old friend of Rubek, — no other, in fact, than the woman who had been his model for "The Day of Resurrection," and thus the inspiration of his best artistic effort. She is attended by a deaconess, a shadowy, silent figure, who speaks only three words at the very close of the drama. Ulfhejm, who is an enthusiastic sportsman, is coarse of speech and unconventional in manner. Maja is attracted to him by his abundant animal spirits, and they plan a hunting expedition. When they have gone off together, Rubek is left with Irene, and memories of the past come surging upon him. In the intimacy of their earlier relations, he had viewed her

with the artist's eye only; she, on the other hand, had loved him with all the strength of her passionate nature. To him she had been an episode; to her he had been everything that makes life desirable. When they had parted she had become like "The Woman with the Dead Soul" of Mr. Stephen Phillips's poem. She had existed, but the vital spark had been extinguished within her breast. He, learning too late how great was his need of her inspiration, had made a prosaic marriage, and had discovered that the creative impulse had fled beyond his control. The situation is something like that of "The Master Builder," when the appearance of Hilda reawakens in the artist the old aspirations and the old ideal visions. Irene reproaches the sculptor with having seen in her only the beautiful figure, not the loving woman's soul.

RUBEK. I was an artist, Irene.

IRENE. Just that, just that.

RUBEK. An artist first of all. And I was ill and would create the great work of my life. It should be called "The Day of Resurrection." It should be produced in the likeness of a young woman, waking from the sleep of death.

IRENE. Our child, yes.

RUBEK. She should be the noblest, purest, most ideal woman of earth, she who awoke. And then I found you. I could use you with complete satisfaction. And you

submitted so willingly, so gladly. Left people and home, and followed me.

IRENE. It was my resurrection from childhood when I followed you.

RUBEK. That was just why I could use you. You and none other. You became for me a sacrosanct creature, whom I might touch only in the worship of my thoughts. I was still young then, Irene. And I was possessed by the superstition that should I touch you, desire you in reality, it would be a desecration, and put beyond my power the work that I sought to do. And I yet believe there is truth in that.

IRENE. First the work of art — then the human child.

RUBEK. Judge of it as you will. But I was completely controlled by my task at that time, and it made me jubilantly happy.

IRENE. And your task turned the corner for you, Arnold.

RUBEK. With thanks and blessings for you, it turned the corner for me. I sought to create the pure woman just as it seemed to me she must awake on the day of resurrection. Not surprised at anything new and unknown and undreamed of, but filled with sacred joy at finding herself unchanged — she, the woman of earth — in the higher, freer, more joyous lands — after the long and dreamless sleep of death. So did I create her — in your image I created her, Irene.

He speaks of a projected journey along the north coast with his wife, but Irene counsels him rather to seek the heights, and asks if he dare meet her again up there. "If we only could!" is his cry, and she

replies: "Why can we not do what we will? Come, Arnold, come up to me." "Why can we not do what we will?" The whole of Ibsen is in that passionate question. Why does deed fall so far short of impulse? Why do we cripple our lives by making them so much less than our ideals? Noticeable also in this scene is the recurrence of the typical motive of "The Master Builder," for as Hilda comes to Solness and recalls the past in such fashion as to rekindle his artistic energies, so Irene comes to the sculptor at a similar period of slackened will, and bids him once more be greatly daring.

In the second act, Rubek and his wife, in sorrow rather than in passion, say some of the things they have long felt, and put into bare and almost brutal speech their attitude toward one another. After this discussion, Maja leaves the scene, meets Irene, and sends her to Rubek. A long reminiscent dialogue between these two then follows, leading to this poetical and impressive climax:—

IRENE. Look, Arnold. Now the sun is sinking behind the peaks. Just see how red the slanting rays shine upon all the hilltops yonder.

RUBEK. It is long since I have seen a sunset on the mountains.

IRENE. And a sunrise?

RUBEK. I think I have never seen a sunrise.

IRENE. I saw a wonderfully beautiful sunrise once.

RUBEK. Did you? Where was it?

IRENE. High, high up on a dizzy mountain top. You enticed me thither, and promised that I should behold all the glory of the world, if I would only —

RUBEK. If you would only? — Well?

IRENE. I did as you told me. Followed you up to the heights. And there I fell on my knees, — and besought you — and worshipped you. Then I saw the sunrise.

The close of this act brings an appointment between the two to spend the warm bright summer night upon the heights. At the same time it must be remembered that Maja and Ulfhejm have planned a hunting expedition for that night also.

IRENE. Until to-night. On the upland.

RUBEK. And you will come, Irene?

IRENE. I will truly come. Wait for me here.

RUBEK. A summer night on the upland. With you, with you. Oh, Irene, it might have been a lifetime. And we have wasted it, we two.

IRENE. We first come to see the irretrievable when —

RUBEK. When?

IRENE. When we dead awake.

RUBEK. What is it we come to see?

IRENE. We see that we have never lived.

With the last act comes the inevitable tragic ending. The scene is laid high up among the mountains, with precipices on the one hand, and

snowclad peaks on the other. The time is just before sunrise. Maja and Ulfhejm first appear, and after a long dialogue come upon Irene and Rubek. A storm is brewing, and the note of warning is sounded by Ulfhejm. He goes down the mountain with Maja, promising to send succor for the others, but they take little heed of this, having reached the pitch of exaltation that cares nothing for physical dangers, and fears only a relapse into the deadly moral conditions of ordinary prosaic life.

RUBEK. Then let us two dead live life once to the dregs, ere we go down again into our graves.

IRENE. Arnold!

RUBEK. But not here in the twilight. Not here, where the wet, hideous shroud flaps about us.

IRENE. No, no. Up into the light and all the glittering glory! Up to the peaks of promise!

RUBEK. Up there we will celebrate our bridal festival, Irene, my beloved.

IRENE. The sun will see us gladly, Arnold.

RUBEK. All the powers of light will see us gladly. And all the powers of darkness. [*Taking her hand*] Will you follow me, then, my gracious bride?

IRENE. Willing and gladly will I follow my lord and master.

RUBEK. We must first make our way through the mists, Irene, and then—

IRENE. Yes, through all the mists, and so straight up to the towering peak, that gleams in the sunrise.

As the two pass upward hand in hand, the tempest increases in violence. The silent attendant of Irene appears and looks about for her mistress. The jubilant voice of Maja is heard from far below. Then, with a roar like thunder, an avalanche sweeps down the mountain side, and buries the devoted two in its depths.

Such is the scene which, like the similar scene in "Brand," leaves us awe-stricken at the close of the drama. We leave to others the task of reading a lesson into this tragic presentment of two human souls thus brought to the crisis of their lives. Journalism — and by journalism is meant the sort of writing which, whether found in newspapers or in books, invariably balks at every form of idealism, and always, of the possible motives for any course of action, assumes the basest or the least worthy, to offer the most rational explanation — journalism, we say, will scoff at this story, just as it scoffed at "*L'Abbesse de Jouarre*" and "*Die Versunkene Glocke*," with both of which works this drama has suggestive affinities. But we pity the reader who can contemplate the situation here created by the genius of Dr. Ibsen, and find only prosaic emotions to feel, only prosaic things to say. An awful pity and an awful sense of omnipotent fate seem the fitting subjective accompaniment of the tragedy here worked

out with unerring objective mastery. In the presence of such creative power, of such a certain grasp upon the very core of passion, such an envisagement of the problem of life when stripped of all adventitious trappings, all criticism seems futile, and all comment superfluous.

Ibsen returned to Norway for permanent residence several years ago, making his home in Christiania, and the honors that have since been heaped upon him by his fellow-countrymen, now unanimous in the pride with which they claim him, have richly atoned for the mistrust and calumny of the earlier years. He has become a prophet for his own country, as well as for the rest of the world, and has entered into the full heritage of his fame. His seventieth birthday, in 1898, was made the occasion of the heartiest of celebrations, and evoked tributes of praise for his work from all parts of the world. This year (1901) he has suffered from a severe illness which leaves little hope of a restoration to his former activity. It is understood that he has prepared some sort of an autobiography, but, such is his habitual secretiveness concerning his literary work, not even his closest friends know very much about it. Even during the months of his recent illness he has been working almost daily at some composition of which no other human being has yet had sight.

It is evident that the work of his life is practically completed; the content and significance of that life-work, as set forth in the preceding pages, are such as to make of it one of the most remarkable intellectual manifestations of the nineteenth century, and to insure its profound and lasting influence upon the twentieth century.

THE END

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